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Former CRC pastor regrets dropped charges in Alberta oil well bombing

Jessie Schut.

HYTHE, Alta. — The Christian Reformed Church has recently been getting more ink in the Canadian press than usual. Unfortunately, the publicity isn't very positive. The church's name is mentioned almost every time the media covers the ongoing story of Wiebo Ludwig, a former pastor of the Christian Reformed

Church of Godrich, Ont.

For the last three or four years Ludwig has been waging a very public battle with energy resource companies that are drilling gas and oil wells in northwestern Alberta. The latest instalment of the saga occurred August 24, when Ludwig, his wife Mamie Lou, son Bo, and a family friend, Richard Boonstra, were arrested after a bomb

exploded at an oil well site near Hinton.

Ludwig, his son and Boonstra were picked up hitchhiking in the area later that day, while Mamie Lou was arrested when the police came to search the house. They were charged with mischief endangering life, carrying a maximum sentence of life

imprisonment. After the communal family farm was put up as bail, they were released.

Charges against the Ludwig and Boonstra families have since been dropped because of insufficient evidence.

"We live in a monolithic society, a society without God," says Ludwig, who regrets the

fact that charges were dropped because "the trial would give us an opportunity to talk about the concerns we have."

The Ludwig and Boonstra families live on an isolated quarter-section of bush and farmland near Hythe, Alberta, where they settled in 1985.

See POISONOUS page 2...



Wiebo Ludwig, shown on his Alberta farm, was charged with bombing an oil-well site.

Aboriginal Christians gather to celebrate culture and faith

Alan Doerksen

RAPID CITY, S.D. — If the word "natives" combined with "religion" makes you think of ceremonies to a nature god, that's not the whole picture. For many natives, Christ changes the picture.

At least 1,000 indigenous people from around the world gathered in Rapid City, South Dakota, in mid-September to celebrate their cultures and how Christ, their "Chief Shepherd," has worked in their lives. One main theme of the gathering was that aboriginals can embrace Christianity without giving up their own cultures.

The World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People (WCGIP) marked the first time in North American history that First Nations Christian people from around the world have gathered on the sacred homeland of the Lakota/Sioux Nation, the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Two years ago, in November 1996, the first such gathering took place in New Zealand



Aboriginals from around the world dressed in their traditional costumes for the opening ceremonies of the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People.

(Rotorua City), where the Maori people welcomed 2,000 indigenous people from other nations.

According to organizers, the gathering is "a time when indigenous people can bring their songs, dances, languages,

regalia and stories as offerings of praise and worship to Jesus Christ, our Chief Shepherd.... Cultural revitalization is a part of the healing process associated with a regained freedom of expression."

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"We are not apostles," says Al
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News

Poisonous gases caused miscarriages, Ludwig claims

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Three of Ludwig's sons have married three of Boonstra's daughters, and with grandchildren, the settlement, which they called Trickle Creek Farms now numbers more than 30 members.

They have been living a communal existence that emphasizes self-sufficiency. They raise sheep, goats, rabbits, chickens and bees; grow much of their own food; have learned to tan hides and weave cloth; and educate their own children. The men also run a profitable drywalling operation and are planning to get into horse-logging.

The problem began in 1990, when the resource industry began to drill wells on the doorstep of Trickle Creek Farms. Most of those wells were sour, meaning that the natural gases are contaminated with hydrogen sulphide (H₂S); when the gas leaks, in low concentrations it gives off a powerful odor of rotten eggs. In higher concentra-

tions, the gas kills the sense of smell and can be deadly.

Deformities, spontaneous abortions

The wells have leaked noxious gasses numerous times, says Ludwig. He claims that the wells have adversely affected the health of his family and injured his livestock. Numerous sheep have aborted their lambs, and in their own family, three babies have miscarried, while a fourth was stillborn on August 21.

"The child was deformed," he says. "It was very similar in abnormalities to the stillborn lambs we saw." Ludwig attributes this to the fact that the baby's mother, Renee, was exposed to sour gas leaks during the first trimester of pregnancy.

The family christened the baby Abel, because, says Ludwig, "like the biblical Abel, he was killed by his brother, by society's negligence." They buried him beside the three

miscarried children.

When the exploration for resources first began, Ludwig appealed to the Energy Resources Conservation Board (now called Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, or AEUB). They offered to let the company that held the resource lease on their land, Ranchman's Resource Ltd., buy their property, but the offer was turned down, and AEUB upheld the decision.

Since then, the war has gone public and has escalated in intensity. More than 160 acts of vandalism have been reported against Alberta resource companies in the last 2 1/2 years.

Last year, Ben Ludwig, the oldest son of Ludwig's 11 children, was arrested, found guilty of vandalizing a gas well, and sentenced to three years probation. Two gasoline bombings at the beginning of August occurred within 20 miles of the Trickle Creek Farm; although nobody is willing to say that the colony is responsible, the finger

seems to be pointing at them.

Alberta Energy Company, which owns and operates hundreds of oil and gas wells in the province, denies Ludwig's claims and says that it has been bending over backwards to resolve the issues. It accuses Ludwig of not co-operating in trying to find a solution.

Real danger

In the meantime, the press that Ludwig has been getting has put the company in a bad light. "In the press, the story is made out as the little man against the big bad oil giants," says Wilson. "But the little people on the streets also include the people who work at the wells, who live and work and raise families in the area. What about them?"

AEC operates a sour gas cleaning plant in Hythe. An act of vandalism very nearly caused a catastrophe at the plant last fall. A bullet from a high-powered rifle ripped through a

window in the manager's office, sending a four-foot shrapnel cloud over his chair, which thankfully was vacant. The bullet went through a wall and lodged in a water pipe.

"Our manager could have been sitting there," says Dick Wilson, the company's media relations officer. "Our employees had to be counselled. Would you want your spouse to go to work there?"

After the gas well bombings, Grande Prairie county council voted to spend \$75,000 a year for up to three years for extra policing. They're asking energy companies to chip in another \$225,000 to "put a lid on this thing," said Reeve Ray Bolstad.

After the arrest, several people expressed their thankfulness that someone is going to answer for the vandalism. That thankfulness evaporated when the prosecutor dropped charges against the Ludwigs and Boonstras.

(See page 20 for more.)

Aboriginals seek Holy Spirit's leading

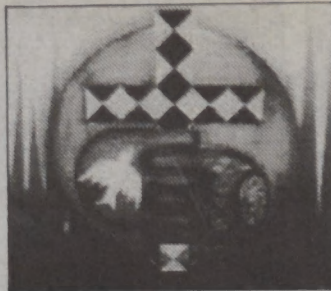
... continued from page 1

On the gathering's website, organizers explain, "The Creator's redemptive purpose is emerging among the tribal peoples of the earth. The cultural expressions which have been suppressed and forbidden by the Church through centuries are now being revitalized by the grace of the Almighty God through Jesus Christ to be used again in the Creator's loving design for the Nations."

Culturally repressed

Wendy Peterson, co-chair of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Aboriginal Task Force, agrees that native people have often been culturally repressed. She feels that aboriginals "need the freedom to take what has been popular in their culture [and] take their culture back to Scripture." Some aspects of native cultures, such as aboriginal drums, have been considered evil by non-natives, but are not evil but simply different, Peterson asserts. Aboriginal people don't make a strict division between the secular and the sacred, she notes.

Peterson helped to organize workshops at the gathering. She sees its main significance as being: "indigenous people trying to define for themselves who they are in Christ."



The gathering's logo

Terry LeBlanc, another member of EFC's Aboriginal Task Force, was one of the main organizers of the conference, as well as of the New Zealand conference of two years ago. LeBlanc is a Mi'kmaq/Acadian native who lives in another Rapid City, in Manitoba. According to LeBlanc, "Our vision is for indigenous people throughout the world to come and grow in Christian faith and to enter into worship of the one and only Creator by way of expressing their own culture."

Seeking God's leading

Although the gathering was primarily for native people, non-natives were also welcome to attend, says Peterson.

Ray Aldred, director of First Nations Alliance Churches Canada, was also part of the

planning committee for the gathering. He travelled from his home in Regina, Sask., to attend the first few days of the event.

Aldred, who is Cree, sees the main theme of the gathering as "the Gospel being contextualized in the cultures of indigenous people. That hasn't happened." When Westerners brought the Gospel to many indigenous people, they brought their cultures with it, says Aldred. But he and the other organizers want to point out that aboriginals do not have to be westernized to become Christians.

"You can still drum and worship Christ," Aldred asserts. Some people think aboriginal culture is "all Devil-worship", but Aldred says that doesn't make sense.

Aldred was impressed with the gathering's opening ceremonies, which he calls "quite a colorful pageant." Each day, different cultural groups would present praise and worship to Christ with many varieties of music, he reports.

Featured at the nine-day event were welcome ceremonies from native Americans, which included a traditional buffalo dinner, a prayer march, a youth rally, traditional songs and

entertainment. There were also workshops on topics such as urban ministry and prison ministry, says Aldred.

Rapid City, S.D., was chosen as a location by organizers because of its historical significance to North American natives. One day, says Aldred, a group of Maori people performed a ceremony at the sculpture of Crazy Horse, close to Rapid City. The giant sculpture of the famous native chief was begun 50 years ago, says Aldred. The sculpture is part of a cliff-face close to Mount Rushmore, where the faces of four American presidents are carved.

Another purpose of the gathering, explain organizers, was "to let the Holy Spirit lead the gathering in order for God's plan for indigenous people to be revealed. Indigenous people have stories, opinions and experiences to share, and the strategy will be to allow adequate time during the gathering to hear God through them on matters affecting their past, present and future. "It will be exciting to accumulate what is shared in order that an overview of God's aspirations and objectives for indigenous people are revealed. We will hear and share with each other and form an international Christian

indigenous network."

Peterson affirms that "good networking" has been happening among native peoples since the 1996 gathering. For example, a group of Maoris from New Zealand who have been working with street people in Winnipeg this year.

Regions of the world organized their own presentations at the gathering, including musical performances, and displays of arts and crafts, some with biblical themes.

A special logo was designed for the gathering (see accompanying illustration) with symbolic significance. The hand on the right represents indigenous people, signified by the mountains and water (sea, lakes and rivers) which are often of great importance to native peoples. The hand on the left represents God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Both hands are united by the cross of Jesus Christ.

Several well-known Christian agencies assisted with organizing or otherwise supporting the conference. They include: the Canadian Bible Society, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, First Nations Alliance Churches Canada, Sacred Assembly - Canada, World Vision and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

The next gathering will take place in Australia in two years.

Environment

Birds, bees and the 'bottom line'

The federal government of Canada is poised to take up one of the more contentious pieces of legislation which will confront it this fall: what to do about endangered species.

What at first may look interesting to only a few scientists and environmentalists isn't so simple. It turns out that the toes of all of us are on the line this time, and not simply because of the economic "bottom line." The debate brings up old tensions once again about the various roles that the federal and provincial governments will play in looking after the land. But the conflict of private property rights and general public interests are also at stake.



The outcome is uncertain, but few issues lend themselves more fundamentally toward defining the nation. The central question seems to be: Can we maintain essential bio-diversity without giving up individual property rights? No matter what your label — urban or rural, First Nation or immigrant, environmentalist or resource worker, or plain citizen, this legislation will have an impact on you.

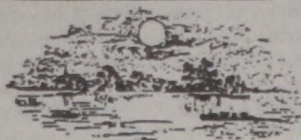
Having our cake and eating it too

Nearly everyone I listen to acknowledges the value of Canada's rich biological heritage, its bio-diversity. But the public has been slower to recognize that conserving this heritage will mean defining new ways of living on the land. Few dispute that humankind has put enormous pressure on living systems, particularly in this century. But beyond that there is little agreement.

What we should do about this impact, or even if we should do anything about it, is still being sharply debated. Translating our concerns about threats to bio-diversity into public policy is proving difficult. The question, after all, goes right to that ubiquitous bottom line. How much will it cost, and who will pay for preserving species?

The Government of Canada, with broad support from the public, ratified the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. The country's commitment to fulfilling these obligations is detailed in the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy.

Creation waits...



John Wood

Although there were mechanisms already in place for species protection and recovery, the plan acknowledges the need for new ways to reduce the threats to bio-diversity while maintaining a sustainable economic future. New policy and economic instruments will be needed to achieve these goals. It is surprising that so little public discussion is going on about how to achieve these vital objectives. Now, six years after the signing, a sweeping new law is being proposed.

'Colossal failure of common sense'

In 1973, the United States led the world in acting to preserve species. But Canada has never had comprehensive federal endangered species legislation. The suggestion that we should now put such a law in place is being greeted in Alberta as a colossal failure of common sense.

The U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA), according to the newly formed Canadian Property Rights Research Institute in Calgary, "has failed to save species."

It has "failed to recognize costs and benefits, failed to compensate for takings of private property, and failed to mitigate perverse incentives," the property rights institute asserts. Common sense says that penalizing property owners without creating positive incentives will fail.

Canada, it is said, "should find a better way." Perhaps it will. The last round of proposed endangered species legislation in 1996 was criticized from all sides of the debate. There are hopes that a new proposal will take a different approach.

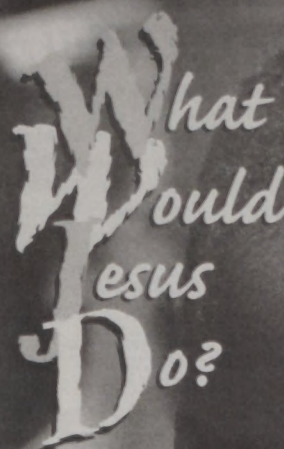
Christians strangely quiet

The fate of endangered species will likely be debated in Canada this fall. The Christian community has been strangely quiet on this question. There has been little information in the popular Christian press, with *Christian Courier* being a notable exception.

Mention the 1992 Bio-diversity Convention, or the Canadian Bio-diversity Strategy and most people say, "What?" with a puzzled look. These are hardly daily household concerns for most people. Even the debate on endangered species legislation stirs little interest in churches. Yet the proposed solutions involve fundamental rights and responsibilities, our private property and the public trust.

The very basis for generating wealth and for acting justly (or not) in the world is under discussion. These are basic stewardship issues, and Scripture has much to say about them. I wonder if we Christians will have a voice at the table? Or if there will only be secularized echoes of the stewardship charge?

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College in Edmonton.



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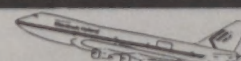
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Guest Editorial

Resource development may not be a black and white issue

Who's right when the person on the street says resource development is dangerous, and the resource development companies say it's not?

As an Albertan who benefits from the royalties that oil and gas contribute to the provincial coffers, I am thankful that Alberta is known as the province of oil and money. As a Christian, though, I often feel troubled by unanswered questions. Is oil exploration just another name for oil exploitation? Do we really know what we're doing?

Are we taking care of the earth in the way that God has mandated that we do? In researching my story on Wiebo Ludwig (see pp. 1 and 20 of this issue), I felt as if I were peeling away at layers of onion. Each layer revealed another one beneath. When I talked to Ludwig, I felt for him. It just wasn't fair that the big companies could come in and destroy his way of life.

Then I talked to John Wood, associate professor of biology at The King's University College, and also to associate professor of political science John Hiemstra. Their thoughtful insights made me look at the issue from another point of view.

Next, I talked to Dick Wilson, public relations man for Alberta Energy Company, which has been on the receiving end of some of Ludwig's anger. He made sense, too.

And so it went. Digging up past records, reading files, talking to people who had dealings with Ludwig — they all added more details to the layers of this story. It was interesting, but also frustrating. It's so much more clear-cut when you can pin the blame and find that someone is right and someone else is wrong.

That's Ludwig's strong opinion, and also his accusation against the church. "The institutional church is anemic, in denial," he told me. "They spiritualize and talk about things so they don't have to deal with the hard issues. Instead of always just yakking about it, they need to get in there and turn things upside down."

Ludwig believes that God wants people to tend the land as mandated in Genesis, to live in intimacy with it. But because society has become urbanized, people have lost that intimacy. They've turned it over to corporate industries, who use it, exploit it and then leave it behind as a mess.

The church needs to stand up and be counted in the battle for stewardship of the land, says Ludwig. "The Old Testament shows us heroes of the faith who persist till the end. We're living here for righteousness sake, not for our own comfort."

"They've spilled blood here," he says, referring to the children who miscarried and the baby boy who was stillborn. "To keep them from spilling more blood, we need to do something. That's justifiable. And I don't believe that justified force is the same as violence. If someone burglarizes your house, you use force to prevent that. You don't kill them, but you do just enough damage to show them they can't take what's yours."

A sense of powerlessness

Ludwig's argument implies that the church isn't doing anything, says John Wood, who has heard that line before. He points out that Christian organizations such as Citizens for Public Justice, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and other relief and development agencies, Earthkeeping, and institutions like The King's with its environmental studies program are working for the cause of environmental stewardship.

However, he acknowledges that Ludwig's situation is troubling. "You can feel the pain," he says. "People feel so powerless, and their voices are not being heard. I've had calls from other people about oil and gas, enough so I know that there are people out there who are not being served either by the oil industry or the government. And when there are no opportunities for people to live an alternative life that doesn't follow secular rules, they feel alienated, and they express themselves in sometimes inappropriate ways."

Wilson, AEC's media relations spokesperson, believes that the company has done what it could to listen to Ludwig and solve his problems. He disputes that Ludwig's claims of endangered health can be verified. "What about the cattle which are grazing across the fence from Mr. Ludwig's property?" he asks. "They're not endangered. We're very proud of our operating record. We monitor wells 24 hours a day, and these programs don't record leaks and operating discrepancies."

Wilson points out that his company is not the only one which is operating wells in the area.

Alberta Energy Company, which is wholly Alberta owned, has exceeded all the standards, follows the regulations, and has even appointed an ombudsman whose only job is to solve the resource-related problems of landowners, he asserts.

Wilson says that he and others have encouraged Ludwig to participate in health evaluations, but Ludwig chooses instead to go to the media and vilify the company. Added security to protect against growing vandalism has cost AEC an extra million dollars this year. The bigger issue may be a social one, says Wilson.

"Is Canadian society really prepared to tolerate this [confrontational] approach to problem solving?" he asks.

The government is biased

Political Science professor Hiemstra says the conflict can be attributed to two different worldviews. Ludwig believes in a biblical stewardship model, while the resource company is looking at the world as something to use.

"I think there are some legitimate questions to ask here," he says. "Oil 'exploitation' companies are sucking the oil out of the ground as fast as they can, and pressing the governments to sell it as quickly as possible."

The only way a company can be stopped is if there are hard, cold numbers that prove danger or damage beyond a doubt. The government tends to be biased in going ahead if the numbers are there, instead of going slowly and thoughtfully. There is money involved.

Ludwig's complaints are similar to what many aboriginals are complaining about in terms of resource exploitation on their land, says Hiemstra. They haven't been heard either.

"If you fly over northern Alberta, you'd be amazed at the development, at the network of roads you see from the air," he says. "Maybe it's time for second thought. Christians should be asking: 'Are we going too rapidly, are we lacking in caution?'"

The problem with militancy

So who's right? Is there a hero in white and a villain in black? Wiebo Ludwig is a complex man with a chequered history, and for me, that fact may be clouding the issues. I'm having a hard time deciding where I stand.

The last word on the issue of black, white and grey belongs to Jim Dekker, pastor of Hope Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, former Albertan, fellow student with Ludwig at Calvin Seminary, and keen observer of the situation.

Without judging the current case, he says, "His ideas in some things like stewardship of the land are sound. But his [views on] violence — based on my memories of him in seminary and using 'violence' in terms of extremely aggressive personal comportment — are not on the side of the angels; rather, on the side of the oil companies he wishes to defeat. That's the trouble with militancy. You don't really trust God. You want to make your fights his fights and win with the devil's tools...."

Jessie Schut

Jessie Schut is Christian Courier's regional reporter in the Edmonton, Alberta, area.

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Letters

God taught natives long before Christians came

I wish to express my appreciation to Bert den Boggende for his informative article on early missions to China (CC Aug. 21). In the ministry God has given me I am always looking for lessons to be learned, for this ministry to Canada's urban native people is indeed complex.

In Canada, Christianity has been, and is often still, closely associated with "the elite and the conquerors." For example, the residential schools were operated by churches with funding from the government. For many native people the institutional church is seen and experienced as imperialistic and syncretistic (native people often have trouble understanding the materialism of our churches). The results of the interventions of an imperialistic church include abject poverty, loss of identity (culture) and family breakdowns.

At the Edmonton Native Healing Centre (ENHC) we strive to walk with these people who have suffered cultural genocide; and in walking with them witness to God's grace and love in Christ.

Den Boggende contends that there is a fine line between accepting culture and making Christianity syncretistic. I observe some ministries in Canada trying to adapt the gospel to a culture.

Christ transforms culture

This is not our perspective at the ENHC. The Reformed perspective of the gospel teaches that God, through Christ, redeems not only individual souls, but all of creation, including culture. We seek to understand the native culture and apply the transforming gospel to that culture.

God was at work with native people and their culture centuries ago. God's Great Spirit taught the people in powerful ways, through creation, through dreams and visions, through the wisdom of the elders, through the many legends and stories, to name a few.

Don Richardson in *Eternity in Their Hearts* [sets out C.S. Lewis' contention] that there are redemptive analogies, evidence of God's grace in every culture. These analogies make the gospel acces-

sible and they point to the gospel.

Since the Holy Spirit is working in all cultures preparing people for the gospel we can expect that in all cultures there are elements of truth pointing toward the gospel. In the Native ceremonies I have participated in I find much that anticipates the gospel. In our ministry at the ENHC I am called to witness to the Good News in Christ. What I share with native people I received as a gift, and I offer as a gift. My task as a witness to the gospel is to identify where people are fleeing from God or searching for God, and then bear witness to Jesus Christ.

I am privileged to witness Christ to a people who have lived close to God for thousands of years. At our centre we encourage native people to rediscover their culture and their spiritual ceremonies/traditions. Then we go a step farther and encourage native people, using a variety of means, to invite into this culture Christ's renewing Spirit. Often I've been amazed to find bits of evidence that Christ was/is at work in this rich culture also long before Europeans came.

Native ceremonies

In answer to den Boggende's final rhetorical question: "...Is (the)... ministry at the ENHC the Christian Reformed 20th century equivalent to Matteo Ricci's?"

Certainly much of the concern I've heard from CRC members relate to the religious ceremonies of native people (i.e., the sweetgrass smudge, the sweat-lodge, drum songs, give-aways) all of

which we have seen performed in our ministry at various times. It is also certain to me that when we engaged ourselves in these ceremonies, Christ was present, and we experienced his redeeming/healing power in those ceremonies. Those participating testified to growing in a closer relationship to God.

Not long ago a 23-year-old woman with an already long history of drug use, prostitution and suicide attempts, herself a victim of sexual and physical abuse, came to me after giving up her newborn infant for adoption. In desperate emotional pain and afraid she might end her own life, this woman asked if I would smudge and pray with her in our prayer room. Without hesitation I offered the smudge and we prayed together that she might again have hope and healing in her life. God has answered our prayers by providing healing. Each day for the following three weeks this woman came in to smudge and pray, and to attend our sharing circle.

Finally, I wish to thank Bert den Boggende for raising these questions. I plan to discover more about Ricci and the Chinese Rites controversy, and so learn from them. My response here is a further peering through a mirror dimly, so I hope other CC readers will respond with their insights. I continue to be on a learning journey and welcome teachers along the way.

John Stellingwerff
Edmonton Native Healing Centre
Edmonton, Alta.

Reader spoke too rashly

Some time ago a friend and I discussed C.C. We reasoned that, should it ever run on dry ground and couldn't be produced anymore, we probably would not miss it all that much. Man, did I ever make a liar of myself.

Ever since that conversation, I have begun to realize how much I really do appreciate your weekly paper — now soon to be a biweekly. Every week it has articles of great interest and learning. Even the letters, whether I agree or not, I

learn from because I do get to see and understand other people's opinions.

Besides, C.C. has become like an old friend. I found two issues waiting for me after my holidays; and, like old friends, they made my homecoming much less lonely. So now I say: "Keep it coming." Biweekly? Okay, if that is necessary; but keep it coming, please!

Hilda Wielemaker
Trenton, Ont.

Opinion

Give him your time

One of our major concerns in our society is that we want everything now! Our children want the latest toys now and our grown families require the up-to-date furniture and technology within weeks of getting married or settling down. Computers and digital sound systems plus the latest model car flow into our everyday life as if they must be there now. Job satisfaction and completely challenging careers plus all the dollars attached to them should arrive now. Even our health and bodies must be in shape now.

With God, however, everything takes time — his time. "The Lord is good to those who wait for him. To the souls that seek him" (Lamentations 3:25).

Waiting works! It works because God works when we give him time. Waiting is surrendering to God. It is knowing that to a child of God, nothing comes a moment too soon or too late, but everything in its true time. God's clock is never too slow. The Holy Spirit knows the right time.

This has to be one of the most important lessons for all of us to learn. He also wants us to know that faith will not always get us what we want, but it will get us what God wants.

"I do not have time to be in a hurry," answered John Wesley years ago. In my Christian life I have had to learn to "let Jesus be top priority, day by day. Everything else will fall into place, even though it may take years."

We must accept God's schedule; trust in God's timing. As Paul said, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day."

As we wait we can be absolutely sure of Christ and his love.

Marten A. Mol
Aurora Ont.

Thinkbit

*"Even a stopped clock is right twice a day. As Bismarck said,
'What you read in the papers may also be true.'"*

Ron Gray, CHP

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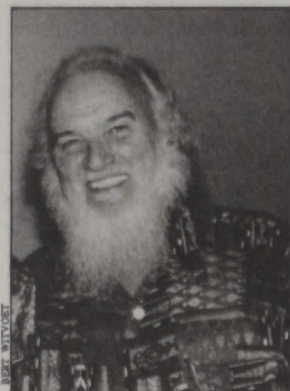
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News/Column

Geisterfer moves to Quebec



Aren Geisterfer

Alan Doerksen

LUSKVILLE, Quebec — After 18 years as the Christian Reformed chaplain at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ont., Aren Geisterfer needed a change of pace. "I was looking for a very quiet place," says Geisterfer. He found one in a comfortable, winterized cottage in Luskville, Quebec, a small,

rustic town on the Ottawa River.

"For health reasons, I had to get away from the big centres," Geisterfer explains. Because of his asthma, the industrial city of Hamilton was not the ideal place to live.

Before he left Hamilton, in late August, the McMaster University Campus Chaplaincy Committee presented a retirement open house for Geisterfer, which 500 friends and former students attended.

Now living in Luskville, Geisterfer will be close to his son, Michael, who with his wife and children lives in Aylmer, Que., and his daughter, Priscilla, who lives in Ottawa with her husband. Geisterfer now attends Kanata CRC in Ottawa.

"I will miss the chaplaincy very much," Geisterfer admits. "I miss reaching out and being with students." But he does not want to join the shuffleboard set yet. "I want to work with people who are persecuted for their faith," he says.

South Africa changes tune on radio control

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (EP) — In response to letters of protest from around the world, the South African government seems to have backed away from a measure which would have closed Christian radio stations by excluding "communities of interest" in a new broadcasting law (see CC, Sept. 11).

A clause of the proposed

broadcasting bill has been changed to call for a study of the idea of phasing out "communities of interest" from radio licenses. The South African group Christians for Truth reports that current Christian broadcasters will have their licenses renewed while the study is underway — at least four years.

Muslim critics say movie leaves wrong impression

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (EP) — American Muslims and Arabs say the upcoming movie *The Siege* stereotypes them as terrorist threats. In the movie, starring Bruce Willis and Denzel Washington, the U.S. responds to terrorist attacks on New York by declaring martial law and forcing American Muslim Arabs into detention camps. A promotional trailer for the film juxtaposes scenes of terrorism with Muslims praying in a Mosque.

Nihad Awad, executive director of the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations, said it is wrong to equate Islam with terrorism. "This is very deeply offensive, to associate our faith, our prayers, things that we do five times a day, with acts of violence," Awad said. "Not all people who see the trailer are going to see the movie, so what impression do we leave people with?"

Cooking in faith

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11:1 (KJV)

When I happily agreed to accept two grocery bags full of red ripe tomatoes on Sunday evening, I knew on Monday morning I would be making tomato sauce to freeze in recipe-sized portions for the weeks ahead. But I didn't know what I would be using as freezer containers. I usually use those empty 750-gram plastic yogurt tubs, but the few I had left after strawberry season I had already used for the tomato sauce I had made the week before. Our family goes through a lot of tomato sauce.

As I cut up my tomatoes, peppers and onions, I reflected on the sermon on faith I'd heard on Sunday. The preacher said that faith is a substance to live by. Noah, Abraham and Moses lived by faith. Jesus said if you prayed in faith you could move a mountain. That's why I wasn't the least bit concerned about how to freeze my sauce. I had prayed in faith and confidently expected something I could use.

Great expectations

When I had four large pans of sauce simmering on my range, my husband, Marty, who knew what I lacked came into the kitchen. "So what are you going to freeze your sauce in?"

"I don't know yet. I prayed for containers."

"But you need something now!"

"Not quite. The sauce has to simmer."

While waiting for my vessels to materialize, I phoned my friend Helen and told her what I was doing.

"I've got lots of those plastic yogurt containers."

"You don't need them?"

"I was planning to give them away."

"I'll be right over."

After I hung up, I found Marty in his office. "I'm going to pick up my containers. They're



Marian den Boer

at Helen's house."

He sighed "Why didn't you tell me? You made it sound like you didn't know where they were coming from."

"I didn't."

"Well you should have thought of asking Helen before you started the sauce."

"I prayed instead. Faith is the substance of things not seen," I misquoted.

He shook his head.

'Leftovers'

Over at Helen's, she pointed to a stack of empty yogurt tubs and three margarine containers she had ready on her kitchen table. "I can give you more if you need them."

I fingered the vessels and thought of the four pans of sauce bubbling on my stove. "Three, six, nine, 12 — looks about right. You know, I prayed for containers. These must be the answer."

Back home I ladled out my sauce, beginning from the largest pan. Because it occurred to me that I might run short, I filled each tub nearly to the top, leaving very little head room. I hoped the lids wouldn't pop off as the sauce froze.

When all the pans were empty, I had exactly one empty margarine tub left. I should have known, I thought, as I scooped a bit out of each too-full container.

Thank you, Lord. Faith is definitely a substance to live by.

Marian den Boer lives with her husband, Marty, and five of their six children in Hamilton, Ont. They've been attending Sunday services at The Life Centre in Burlington.

Tourism boycott of Maldives called to protest persecution

LONDON, England (EP) — The London-based Jubilee Campaign is calling for a tourism boycott in the Maldives because of that country's continuing repression of Christian converts from Muslim backgrounds.

Since June 18, authorities in the Maldives have arrested a large number of Christians and others who inquired about the Christian faith. Dozens of Maldivian Christians remain in prison, while expatriate Christians have been deported.

The Christian prisoners are reportedly under tremendous pressure to convert back to

Islam, and are being forced to perform the daily Islamic prayers and to read the Koran despite their independent decisions to become Christians.

Wilfred Wong, Parliamentary Officer for the Jubilee Campaign, said, "The Maldivian government has deliberately persecuted Christians from Muslim backgrounds in an attempt to destroy the local church and to force the Christians to give up their faith. Such action is a gross violation of international standards of religious freedom. It is absurd to expect that people who are forced to adhere to a

particular religion will actually follow it sincerely. We call on all those who support religious freedom to refrain from visiting the Maldives until all the prisoners of faith are unconditionally released and the Maldivian government respects the right of its people to choose their own religion."

Britain is one of the major tourist-sending countries to the Maldives, which receives about 80 per cent of its income from tourism.

Jubilee Campaign is an inter-denominational Christian human rights pressure group.

Children's Books

Reviews by Marian Van Til

Simple kids' drawings display solid faith

In God's House Children's Drawings

Compiled with a foreword by Robert Coles.

Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.
ISBN 0-8028-5126-6. [32] pp. \$15 (US).

Robert Coles, the pediatrician and child psychologist who compiled this book, tells us that it came out of his 30 years of talking with children "about their lives, their hopes and worries, their wishes and fears." When he became a kind of field worker whose job it was to interview young people in schools and in their homes, he would ask them to draw pictures.

This poignant little book contains a handful of those pictures, accompanied by brief verbal descriptions by the child artists, all of whom, says Coles, are "at risk" in some way.

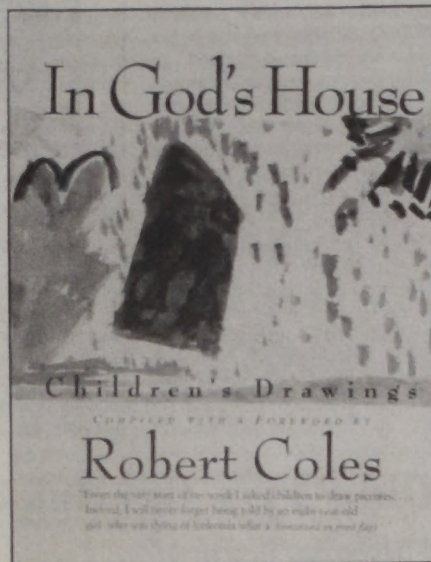
"...They are poor, hurt, ailing, abandoned, abused.... They are struggling to make sense of this world, and of their situation in it. Many of the 'whys' children

ask are here rendered pictorially."

But many of these pictures display great, if simple, faith. In Coles' words: "In their own provocative ways, these children join their parents and teachers, their elders — showing with crayons and responsive comments how powerfully God informs their lives and prompts from them speculation, creative exploration, and expression. Their minds are eager to fathom the world's mysteries, including

those of faith — or of what lies ahead in God's scheme of things."

An excellent book for school and church libraries, or as a gift to a child to stimulate his or her own faith-related creativity.



The Flood story retold

Noah's Wife

Written by Marty Rhoades Figley.
Illustrated by Anita Riggio.

Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
ISBN 0-8028-5133-9. 32 pp. Hardcover picture book. Ages 3-8. \$15 (US); paper: \$7.50 (US).

This book for three- to eight-year-olds is the biblical story of the flood told with a slight twist — from Noah's wife's point of view. It incorporates all the biblical information and then imaginatively expands on it for children in a way in keeping with the biblical narrative. And the illustrations nicely reflect that imaginative expansion.

Besides presenting the "normal" Bible story, children come away from this book with a picture of Noah and his wife as a loving couple, and Noah's wife as an affectionate mother, lover of animals, and a good-natured woman who smiled at her husband's eccentricities:

Noah was a dreamer.
He told his wife, "I have received some very upsetting news from God. There's going to

be a flood all over the world!"

Noah's wife asked, "Are you sure you didn't dream this, husband?"

"No," answered Noah. "I have faith that this news is from God."

Well, Noah was also a tinkerer ("That's a lot of gopher wood to tinker with."); and a collector ("Does that mean collecting slithery snakes and scaly lizards too?")

But "Mrs. Noah," of course, shared her husband's faith, and after the long ordeal, when she



saw that God had "arched his promise across the sky," Noah's wife's mouth "curved into a sweet smile...."

Parables for preschoolers

God's Little Seeds A Book of Parables

Written and illustrated by Bijou Le Tord.

Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. ISBN 0-8028-5169-X. Hardcover picture book. 32 pp. \$15 (US), paper: \$7.50 (US). Ages 2-6.

This whimsically illustrated book introduces very young children to the fact that Jesus told parables, what they are and why he told them. Then the parables of the Sower and the Mustard Seed are used as examples.

Bijou Le Tord has a way of making all this simple while still presenting it in a way which doesn't underestimate children's intelligence, and in a way which allows the Good News to shine through.

God's Little Seeds A Book of Parables



Bijou Le Tord

12-year-old's e-mail news-letter reaches 52 countries

MOLESWORTH, Australia (EP) — In January of 1997, 12-year-old Rachel Timperon sent out the first issue of her free weekly e-mail newsletter for young Christians from her home in Australia. Within a month "Kid's World" was reaching young people in 16 countries; today it has hundreds of subscribers in 52 nations on six continents.

With the help of her co-editor, Pastor Ron Clarke, her grandfather and the author of the long-running "Word for the Week" e-mail devotional page, Rachel, now 14, produces a weekly mix of stories, quizzes, competitions, birthday announcements and personal greetings that is drawing raves from young readers around the world.

According to Australian journalist Ramon Williams, the publication is aimed at 8-15-year-olds and is creating a "worldwide community of Christian children on the Internet." It is a recommended site in the worldwide Christian Internet directory.

"The reason for its success is it's an e-mail to each child," Clarke explains. "They treat this as a personal letter."

Every subscriber receives an extra e-mail on the day before [his or her] birthday — a nice touch that requires an entire program on Clarke's computer just to manage the birthday database.

"Kid's World" readers are encouraged to send in contributions, and the newsletter runs a confidential "penfriend" exchange program. To subscribe, kids should send e-mail to: rachel@tassie.net.au. Include name, birthday, hometown and e-mail address.

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Church

Churches may be hindering, not helping, family growth

VENTURA, Calif. (EP) — A decade ago, North Americans were spending millions to discover that they were co-dependent hostages to their inner children. One of the favorite expressions of the '80s was "dysfunctional family," and some public speakers claimed that as many as 95 per cent of all families could be described as such.

That era seems to have run its course, leaving families no better off, despite the commercial bonanza reaped by the gurus who rose and fell during that period.

Meanwhile, thousands of churches are marketing themselves as "family-friendly" places, regularly preaching sermons on the biblical importance

of family, offering numerous programs designed to solve family problems, and even hiring staff whose primary focus is to aid families in their quest for insight into the mysteries and struggles of family life.

But a new study by researcher George Barna concludes that most churches do more to hinder family growth and development than to enhance such progress, in spite of the best of intentions and an accurate understanding of the importance of the family.

Programs or people first?

Barna's research shows that most churches are adept at teaching biblical information about families and at providing traditional counseling services for those who seek such

assistance. But churches generally miss the mark, according to the data, when it comes to helping families to build better internal relationships and to solve their ongoing problems.

Perhaps most importantly, the study concluded that churches are more intent on building an impressive roster of programs than they are at providing family members with the skills and support systems they need to address the difficult challenges every family typically faces.

Barna says that the single most important distinction between the churches having a positive impact on family life and those that are trying hard but not succeeding concerns the

philosophy of family ministry.

"The typical church tries to help a family by identifying its problems and then solving those problems for the family. Those churches think they are doing the family a great service," Barna explains. "However, our research clearly shows that such an approach is often counterproductive. Solving a family's problems for them creates a dependency upon the church...."

Creating dependency

"The churches that have the most effective ministries to families are the ones that help families become efficient, independent problem-solvers. These churches do not have a huge

range of family programs and classes. Instead, they focus upon helping parents and children to become self-sufficient by recognizing the warning signs of approaching crises. These churches invest time and energy in helping those family members develop problem-solving skills and to be committed to resolving those problems in a biblical manner.

"Our research clearly showed that people do not need more sermons about the importance of family. What they do need is more practical discussions and experiences designed to identify and resolve emerging family crises."

Did PTL's Jim Bakker get a fair trial? Episcopal law prof says No

DES MOINES, Iowa (EP) — Televangelist Jim Bakker spent five years in prison for defrauding supporters of his PTL ministry, which fell apart in a sex and money scandal. But according to the new book *Jim Bakker: Mis-carriage of Justice?* (Open Court), there was another scandal: the way the TV preacher was railroaded during his trial.

Author James Albert, an Episcopalian and former U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) attorney, told *Charisma* magazine that Bakker's criminal trial was an example of "religious bigotry triumphing over the rule of law." Albert researched Bakker's case for five years, studying the 4,000-page trial transcript and interviewing key players, including witnesses, jurors and lawyers.



Jim Bakker

Charlotte, North Carolina, even though Bakker's attorneys said he could not get a fair trial there. Investigative reporters with the

Charlotte Observer had pursued Bakker for years, and had won a Pulitzer prize for reporting on Bakker and PTL. In the 12 months before the trial the newspaper published 999 articles about Bakker, averaging 2.7 per day. The day before jury selection, the newspaper published a full-page board game about the upcoming trial called "Down the Tubes" — a game that wound up on the refrigerator door of one juror.

"What I learned in five years of independent, honest investigation and research appalled me," Albert told *Charisma*. "The real scandal here was in the trial, not in Jim Bakker's alleged criminal actions."

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New Age fosters 'unreal dreams': Pope

RIMINI, Italy (ReligionToday) — New Age religions foster "unreal dreams" and create a fantasy world, John Paul II told a gathering of youth in Rimini, Italy, on Aug. 25. Young people are especially vulnerable to such teachings, which seem to have spiritual weight but foster "illusory ideologies" and lead people away from reality, he said.

Absolute morality is found in only Christianity, and philosophy and science fail to give people clear moral direction, said the Pope. The Vatican recently condemned the writings of a deceased Jesuit priest who tried to combine elements of Buddhism, Christianity and Taoism.

Anthony de Mello of Bombay, India, committed heresy because he suggested that Jesus is just one of many spiritual leaders. The Pope is writing an encyclical that exposes the failure of modern philosophy and New Age beliefs. *Faith and Reason* is to be released in October.

'Maximum Bob' biased

He argues that Bakker's trial was unfair for several reasons:

- Trial court judge Robert "Maximum Bob" Potter allowed prosecutors to bully and mock defense witnesses, including "cracks about Pentecostalism."
- In addition, Potter himself showed distaste for Bakker during the trial.

- Bakker's attorneys failed to turn up a key videotape which helped exonerate Bakker in a civil trial seven years later. The tape, made during a PTL broadcast, showed Bakker explaining that "partnership" donations could also be used to fund ongoing PTL ministries.

- The trial was held in

Church

'Truth' can destroy unity

The Church of Christ is an enormously powerful institution because it holds the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. The truth and discipline of the gospel are the keys. When faithful people handle those keys, the pronouncements of the church on earth hold in the halls of heaven.

However, if the church has lost the gospel truth, the keys don't fit the lock. The door remains closed. The sin-sick world cannot be cured and the members of the church live with a false belief and die in delusion. A church that has lost the truth is worse than a doctor who has no medicine.

All of us in the Reformed tradition agree that truth-keeping is an essential mark of the church. And the saying that the church is "the pillar and foundation of the truth," (1 Tim. 3:15) is often quoted among us. But truth has a twin. It is unity. The church of Christ is under obligation to preserve both.

Unity does not mean that you look like me or that I talk like you. It's a unity of faith, God produced our unity through Christ. It is not something we attained but something God granted. We are united by the grace of Christ, the love of the Father and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The truth we confess is at the same time the basis for our unity. That's why I said truth and unity are twins.

Now we must cling to Christ and to each other. We must love both truth and unity. In other words, the confessional and ecumenical aspects of the church are equally important.

The glory of the Reformation (of the 16th century) was the restoration of the truth. Its bitter after-taste was the loss of unity. Since that time we often used the truth-as-we-perceived-it to destroy unity. As a matter of fact, today many teachers in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition will say that unless you agree with the Reformed-faith-as-they-phrase-it, you can have no fellowship with them.

Calvin wasn't a purist

John Calvin would certainly not agree with these purist teachers. He broke with the Roman

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
● Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

Church because the Word was not preached and the Sacraments were not properly administered. The church of this day had lost the marks of authenticity. But Calvin would passionately oppose leaving the church because it was not pure or because it was deficient in non-essential doctrines (*Institutes* IV, i, 12 and 13).

Forty years ago it was common to say that in the Christian Reformed Church we belonged to this denomination because it was "the purest manifestation of the body of Christ" as we know it. That rhetoric has cooled down considerably. But smaller Reformed denominations are still engaging in self-deception.

Pitting truth against unity

The purist tradition sets truth over against unity in an unbiblical way. One can use unity to destroy truth, of course. That was and still is the reason (right or wrong) why evangelical and many Reformed groups don't join the National Councils of Churches, nor the World Council of Churches. We, however, are tempted to use the truth to destroy unity. Therefore, we would do well to think deeply on the New Testament teaching about unity as an essential part of being Christian church in the present world. (See John 17:20-23; 1 John 4:19, 21; Eph. 2:17-22, 4:1-13, etc.)

I agree with David E. Holwerda ("Truth, Unity & Mission" in *Calvin Seminary Forum*, Vol. 3, No. 4): "...The schism occurring today, as well as the schism of the 1920s, ...[is] not justifiable in the light of the Scriptural teaching on truth and unity. In both cases, the disagreements are/were serious, but in neither case do they attack the essential truths creating unity."

Andrew Kuyvenhoven is a retired Christian Reformed pastor and former editor of *The Banner*, the official publication of the CRC. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Mexican pastors say Palau Crusade helped unify churches

NOGALES, Mexico (EP) — "One of the things this crusade did was take our jealousy away and bring us unity," Eduardo Zuniga, a Nogales, Mexico, pastor and president of the Luis Palau Crusade committee, said in late August. "The Luis Palau team has taught us how to work together."

Pastors weren't the only ones noticing a difference during the crusade, August 26-29. "The city of Nogales knew something was happening," Jim Williams, LPEA vice-president of Spanish Ministries, said. "People walked up to me on the street and asked me about the crusade."

Some 19,000 people attended crusade events, where Luis Palau clearly presented the



Luis Palau

Gospel each evening; 1,300 people registered decisions for Jesus Christ.

Ohio can keep its Bible-text motto: judge

COLUMBUS, Ohio (religion-today.com) — The State of Ohio can keep its motto but can't cite its originator, Jesus, a U.S. federal judge ruled on Sept. 1.

The judge said that the quote "With God All Things Are Possible" does not promote a particular religion so long as its source is not named. Those words "do not state a principle unique to Christianity," U.S. District Judge James Graham said. "They could be classified as generically theistic."

The saying is from Matt.

19:26, and has been the state motto since 1959.

Gov. George Voinovich sought to have the state seal, with the motto, placed in a sidewalk in a downtown Columbus plaza. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenged the move. "We thought we had presented some pretty persuasive arguments that a quote from Jesus Christ from the New Testament was not an appropriate motto for the state of Ohio," the ACLU's Mark Cohn said.

European Parliament may curtail Sunday freedom

LONDON, England (EP) — A European Parliament directive passed last month may affect rights to Sunday observance. The directive permits employers to require employees to operate on a 14-day schedule, with two rest days at the end.

Such a schedule would make Sunday observance impossible. John Alexander, head of the Keep Sunday Special Campaign said no protection is offered to employees who, on the grounds of conscience and religious practice, are unwilling to work on a specific day of the week.

Reacting for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Britain,

John Surridge, communication director, said, "The implementation of this directive will reduce religious liberty and negatively affect the fundamental human

right to a day of worship. We call on those concerned not to support or implement this problematic directive."

Revival sweeps Welsh town

BEAUMARIS, Wales — The online news service religion-today.com is reporting that the northern part of Wales is experiencing a spiritual revival. Beaumaris, a coastal town, has about 601 homes, and 130 people became Christians during four services at a local church recently. About two-thirds of those who came to the services

are local people who rarely attend church.

Attendees have also said that they have been healed of physical infirmities such as blindness during the services. "Such a response to the gospel has not been seen in this area since the days of the Welsh revivals," Northwest Revival News said.

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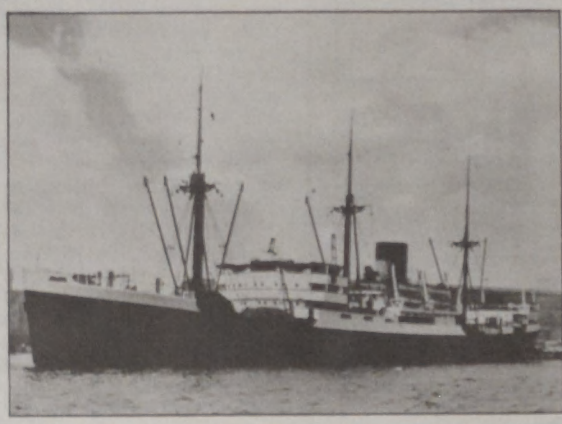
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Personal Experience

The unknown country

by
Walfried E. Goossen



We came over on the "Tabinta," August 1948.

On August 16, 1948, a small, 10,000-ton freighter left the harbor at Rotterdam, the Netherlands, with 500 people aboard. A six-year-old boy stood at its rail amid the emigres from all over Europe. The boy was a war veteran. I was that boy.

As I watched, afraid and bewildered, the *Tabinta* slowly pulled us away from Europe and headed toward the open sea, carefully picking a stream between the dozens of rusted hulls which stuck in the harbor bottom, their sterns pointing skyward like ducks bobbing for fish.

On the third day, a wild wind unleashed its fury on us and nearly sank the ship. I, however, was oblivious to all this. Having spent too much time at the ends of the ship where the fall and rise are the most obvious, especially in heavy seas, I was soon seasick and so tired from retching into a make-shift receptacle that my weary body and spirit surrendered helplessly to sleep.

By the third night I was quarantined, not for seasickness, but for measles. Mother and I spent almost the entire trip in a private cabin. The first couple of days were the most memorable. I couldn't see far enough to know where the sea and the horizon melted into each other. The second day a freighter, turned passenger ship for the war, passed a few hundred feet from us on its way back to Europe.

We all waved and shouted and were warmed by this human contact, sure evidence that we were not alone. As I looked at that ship heading to Europe I longed to be on it. It was going back home. Home is where you want to be, not where you have to be.

I wasn't sure where I wanted to be. Would I live in the haunting loneliness of missing my Father in Canada, or would home be in the exciting wonder of a new life? Were we making it impossible for him to find us; was he perhaps alive? The KGB

had taken him away one night to a concentration camp near Omsk in Siberia, a city of a million people today. He is still there.

I glanced back once more at the freighter. It was gone, shrouded by the morning mist.

Our voyage actually began on September 15, 1943, when I was two-and-a-half years old. It was a dark, rainy day in our town, Halbstadt. The Nazis were retreating but took many German-speaking, Russian-born people with them. As Christians and conscientious objectors and of German stock we knew that there was little chance for us to avoid Stalin and his communist butchers.

We made the trip to Poland in cattle cars so packed that if you

Suddenly, there she was in the middle of the track matching her 10-year-old legs against those large, unfeeling steel wheels. All of us on the train were helpless to stop it. The Nazis had their own agenda. Nothing would delay them.

Somehow by God's grace she actually managed to catch up with the caboose, where a number of people, including her Sunday school teacher, stood on the platform desperately urging her on. Eleanore was running with her hand outstretched toward the platform. Her Sunday school teacher let go of her own hold on the platform railing and trusted herself to others who were hanging onto her. She leaned as far forward as she

'I wasn't sure where I wanted to be. Would I live in the haunting loneliness of missing my father in Canada, or would home be in the exciting wonder of a new life?'

lifted a foot the space was immediately taken by someone else. My brother Alfred travelled for hours standing on one foot. Once in a while the train was stopped to allow us refugees to stretch our bodies and use that huge outhouse, the Russian steps.

During one such stop the train started to roll again but my sister Eleanore was not back yet.

could — and grabbed my sister's hand and yanked her up onto the platform. Another minute or two and Eleanore would have lost strength and would have fallen. I cannot begin to imagine her terror had she remained entirely alone in those vast steppes. We likely would never have seen her again.

By 1944 we were living in

Miltenberg, Germany, in an apartment over an abandoned brewery. One day Alfred came home very agitated and shouted, "The Russians are coming. They are taking back to Russia all refugees in army trucks."

And come they did. We nailed shut the windows and door and lay under the bed hardly daring to breathe. One sound from any of us and the whole family might well have suffered the same fate as 23,000 of the refugees — "repatriation" and, often, death. We were among the 12,000 who got away. In those war years death was the fifth member of our family.

Mother was in many ways a very courageous woman, and very intelligent. She organized a group to visit General Eisenhower's headquarters which were only 25 kilometres distant. They were permitted only to speak to his adjutant, who took their message into the General's office. The adjutant came back with a big smile on his face. "You won't have to worry about the Russians anymore. Eisenhower is dispatching a message to the Russians that they are not to forcibly repatriate refugees or hunt them down with house-to-house searches." We liked Ike long before anyone put the slogan on a campaign button.

After a few months we again uprooted ourselves and moved to Braunsbach, a little village in Bavaria. After three years there we were called to the Mennonite refugee office of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in nearby Stuttgart.

We, like most refugees, had applied for landed immigrant status in the U.S. Now the Mennonite administrator, Dr. Unrauh, told us that passage to the U.S. could require months of waiting, but we could go to Canada (a country unknown to us) within a couple of weeks. Canada was almost as good as the U.S., he pointed out. Canadian journalist Bruce Hutchison wrote a book about Canada some 50 years ago, *The Unknown Country*, unknown because it was growing and developing and always changing (as it still is today).

Mother didn't hesitate. She wanted to get us away from the Continent, the rubble, the memories of air raids and the macabre silent mourning of Germany, which was now a national cemetery.

In Braunsbach, as everywhere we lived, I quickly made a best friend. Juergen was my age. We were thicker than a conspiracy. I

knew him for three years. And as in every case, I had to again say goodbye to a friend, knowing only goodbye was suitable. No "Auf Wiedersehen" — "until we meet again."

But the mourning was almost over for us and the dancing about to begin. I was told I would stay in a hospital when we arrived in Quebec City. My measles would require another week before the red spots faded from sight. However, I was allowed to go on deck on the last day of our crossing to get accustomed to walking around, and to enjoy the fresh air.

At first I saw faint lines of green on the distant banks, like a line drawn across a paper with a colored pencil. Slowly the line grew thicker and I saw what appeared to be small huts with smoke climbing gently from their chimneys into the air. Finally we reached Quebec City — Canada! Our relief, excitement and gratitude to God were inexpressible.

The harbor was full of boats and noise and the raucous calling of seagulls. Tugs and various small boats circled the *Tabinta* and welcomed us with shouting



Dad, Peter Goossen, 55-59 years old, about 1963-1967.

and waving and blasts of their horns.

I watched over the rail for several hours until we were at last permitted to disembark. I stumbled down the gangplank like a six-year-old drunken

PHOTOS COURTESY WALFRIED E. GOOSSEN

sailor. I had become accustomed to lifting my feet high and "rolling" with the ship. Walking on land seemed like a new experience. I lifted my feet and

We sat for a few minutes in the quiet darkness surrounding us. Then we got off to claim our unknown but already beloved country.

moved my body side to side as if I was still out on the water.

In a week we were on the move again. Our final destination was Winnipeg, where the largest Mennonite population in Canada is found.

The train trip to Winnipeg was nearly 2,000 miles, a long trek so soon after a 12-day ocean voyage. The train was quite full, gradually dispersing its many to various parts of the country where their sponsors or relatives waited.

At last we met an American. Mother was a very gregarious person, friendly and a bit aristocratic, not lacking in self-esteem, in spite of our circumstances. She got into conversation with a joyful, bubbly American woman who was just going home to the U.S. Canadian people, she exclaimed, are terrific. Her son had just married a "wonderful" Canadian girl.

It was all part of the post-war delirium. The world was hungry for life, for happiness, and people, I think, were generally more generous and loving to their neighbors than usual. The woman chattered away with Mother, both of them exhibiting a remarkably effective sign language which they improvised on impulse.

One day the American brought out a beautiful, brand-new, once-worn dress and gave it to Mother, who hardly dared put it on. If only the neighbors in Braunsbach and Halbstadt could see her now. She had become royalty.

At last we reached Winnipeg. As the train slowed down and rolled slowly into the station area we knew we were at home. We sat for a few minutes taking in the quiet darkness surrounding us. Then we got off to claim our unknown but already beloved country. We were immediately in the arms of several people who had been friends of our family and Mother's school mates in the Mennonite colony in Russia.

During our second week in Canada I started first grade. I

didn't know a single word of English.

We were in Winnipeg for just three months when we received a letter from an American Mennonite family who owned a fruit and jam cannery. They had sent us care packages in Germany. My mother found a check for \$13.50 in it and thought it was very nice of them to send us this gift. But Elli, a young friend, almost fainted when she was shown the check. She pointed out that it was for \$1,350. We promptly bought the house in which we rented the upstairs.

A widow, two young teenagers and a small school boy; three months in Canada and we owned our own home. Madness. But most people wished us well. Eleanore and Alfred were working almost from the day we arrived in Winnipeg. At first Mother was able to work too. I earned my living by going to school, delivering the *Winnipeg Free Press* and being cute. Three years later we moved to Ontario and got double the price for the house.

Winter came in a few months. In a short time I was a road hockey warrior named Rocket Richard, and won the Stanley Cup everyday in front of our house. And I learned to punctuate my broken English with that powerful password, "eh."

One of the most vivid memories I have of Europe is of Miltenberg, the German city where we were almost forced back to Russia. A block or two from our apartment, a stone bridge arched the narrow road. At one end of it there was a prison, and a solitary prisoner. No one knew much about him or why he was there.

Some evenings I would sit on our front steps in the deepening dusk as a full moon shed an eerie pall over our cobblestone street. The street was silent. Once in a while a gust of wind banged a window shutter closed, flung it open again and crashed it shut again.

I sat on our steps sadly yearning for my father. The man in the tower desperately yearned for his wife. Each night he would call out repeatedly with long haunting cries which echoed down the street. "Maria! Maria!"

How often can one heart be broken? Who is he? I wondered. And why did he daily call out my mother's name?

Walfred Goossen, a periodic contributor to CC, is a free lance writer who writes primarily fiction. He lives in Dundas, Ont.



1948 immigration picture taken in Germany.



In Poland, 1943. I was two years nine months minimum, not more than three-and-a-half.

Books

The challenge to do what is right

Calvin G. Seerveld

Ken Badley has written a book that is a solid achievement of Christian scholarship and is making a difference on the secular educational scene. It needs to be better known and appreciated, I think, in Christian school circles too.

Worldviews, the Challenge of Choice (Toronto: Irwin, 1996) is a textbook geared to the high school teenager in Canada. It faces the questioning of indifferent adolescents with current ethical problems like: What is a family? How should we view work? Why do people commit suicide? Is war ever justified? How come religions of love-your-neighbor and global poverty co-exist?

Comparative views

This textbook draws the young person into discussion of what's right and wrong in our society in the context of the world's major faiths and their respective worldviews. Each chapter uses short, precise paragraphs, vivid four-color illustrations, cartoons and boxed quips to explain how Muslims, and then how Christians, think about "family"; the way Buddhism, and then the way Christianity, considers "euthanasia"; how Sikhs, and then Christians, deal with "sexuality"; how traditional aboriginal First Nations' spirituality and the range of Christians view our "environment"; how Judaism, Christianity and the occult deal with "daily life and the world of the Spirit"; and

much more.

Badley is scrupulously fair in presenting each faith's viewpoint on the selected problem (a key figure of the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism checked the text for bias) while remaining discretely Christian in orienting the whole book of 435 pages. He frequently warns his high school readers that people of different faiths do not always practise what they say they believe, and even disagree among themselves (61, 381).

Badley also points out that different faiths, for different reasons, often share many ethical norms and promote common moral practices.

Every-day examples

The first three chapters are written to overcome resistance to being reflective, and to set the stage. There is a graphic newspaper report of a murder in a neighborhood to which no one who saw it happening responded for fear of getting involved — is that right? (13-14). So robbing a bank is wrong. What about copying software — is that any different? (16) Most boys agree they would be teased if they dated an overweight girl (77-78) — so what does that mean about lifestyle?

Without talking down to youth, but in grabbing them visually with off-hand matter-of-factness, Badley shows high school students they are making ethical decisions out of some worldview or other, whether

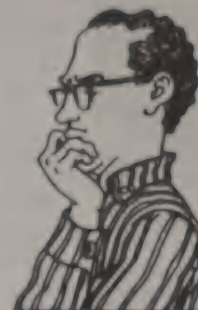
Adolescents mean...

Let me learn
Let me make some real decisions
Give me the right to voice an opinion
Accept me
Trust me
Treat me as an adult
Grant me independence



Adults think they mean...

No rules
Licence
Recklessness
Lawlessness
Irresponsibility
Destruction
Disaster



An illustration from Ken Badley's *Worldviews, The Challenge of Choice*.

they are aware of it or not (293).

Each person is each answering certain unavoidable, deep-going questions simply by the way he or she lives his or her life: Where does the buck stop? What in the world is the world, and how did it get here? What are humans for, anyhow? How should we live — why? What rules your life — what do you hope for, if anything?

This textbook, in small bites, actually shows readers that there are exciting problems they do face, and that they need to make thoughtful judgments rather than just thoughtlessly follow the crowd. Should morality be determined by a majority vote (of Canadians, or a high school class [166])?

Informative and imaginative

The text is also expertly informative, for example, on what Muslims — for whom all of life is religion — consider a *jihad* to be (318-26); and the text presents a terse, eloquent statement by protestor Loren Wilkinson (who engaged in civil disobedience), with a rebuttal by Tim McCarthy on the Clayoquot Sound logging operation (295-305).

And there are hundreds of imaginative projects, small group discussion questions, possible assignments noted:

"Morality is the custom of one's country and the current feeling of one's peers. Cannibalism is moral in a cannibal country. — Samuel Butler, British author.

What was moral 2000 years ago is moral today. — Roseanne Skoke, anti-gay MP from Nova Scotia, quoted in E. Kaye Fulton, "Gay and Proud: Canada's

only public gay MP tells his story," *Macleans*.

In small groups or as a class, discuss these quotations. Who do you think is "right"? Or is the truth somewhere in between? Are there moral principles that remain valid, no matter what the circumstances? If so, which principles?" (26)

Not only is the visual layout of the pages of this book attractive and fascinating, like MTV in print, but one senses faintly through careful repetition in simple sentences and an occasional marginal comment, "Before reading this section, you may want to ... re-read the introduction to Sikhism..., pages 107-112" (409), that the whole account of choosing a worldview does hang together.

Gradually a student becomes aware that it would be normal to ask what a Christian approach, a Buddhist approach, a traditional Aboriginal view is on, for example, advanced medical technology and keeping grandpa alive on machines.

Everybody in our multicultural country mosaic has a somewhat different worldview take on real problems in our society, and one needs to respect, tolerate, sometimes celebrate such differences as we try to act ethically, true to our own conviction, in a way that is good for the neighbor.

Don't give up and adopt relativism! The irreligious irresponsibility of "non-faith" secularism does start to come through.

No preaching

What impressed me in this ethics textbook is not simply the concise clarity and low-key exposition of the historic Christian

faith, using the Apostle's Creed as text (61-67) — there is also reference to the Christian Reformed Church's "contemporary testimony," *Our World Belongs to God* (292) — but the fact that the relevance of a biblical Christian worldview which relates cultural responsibility to stewardly care (263-66) becomes winsome to young people next to other major options.

Ken Badley does this in an irenic teaching way. He does not preach what everybody should do. And it is quite refreshing to see Christian wisdom subtly underlie his book's posing of the questions everybody has to face — Muslims, Buddhist, Jewish and Christian believer, secularist — rather than quick-fix answers in the name of Christ, which really do not help much in fostering a caring community.

Refreshing witness

The Christian community should thank Ken Badley (at present an independent scholar and educator in Edmonton, Alberta) for this refreshing witness to the role that Christian faith can play in our multifaith, secularized Canadian society which must educate the rising generation to ethical maturity. I am very thankful *Worldviews: The Challenge of Choice* has served as a required text in the largest system of high schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, and is being authorized for high school use in Saskatchewan, and possibly Quebec. So far it has sold about 6,000 copies. Ask for it at your local library.

Dr. Calvin Seerveld is professor emeritus in aesthetics at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.



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We are not apostles

A concluding response to Henk Hart on the Bible's 'timeless principles'

Al Wolters

Dear Henk,

My detailed response to your last article has turned out to be much too long. I will mail it to you separately. Within the space allotted to me here I will deal only with what I take to be the main issues: the matter of timeless principles, the relationship of Word and Spirit, and the biblical evidence which you adduce for your position.

'Timeless principles' a red herring

I have come to the conclusion that you do not really deny that the Bible teaches timeless principles. There may be some philosophical sense in which you want to defend such a position, but it is clear to me that you believe as much as I do that certain basic teachings of Scripture hold true for the church of all ages.

"But the Spirit does not introduce a series of changes to the Word."

Why do I say this? For one thing, I know you too well. I'm sure that you wouldn't deny, for example, that the centrality of Christ is a basic teaching of Scripture which will always be true. For another, the examples which you give of changes within the Bible are all quite compatible with a traditional view of Scripture and timeless principles. Besides, you yourself seem to be intent on showing that Scripture teaches at least one principle which is permanently valid, namely "the primacy of the Spirit." In my view, your denial of timeless principles is essentially a red herring. The real issue is your view of the Spirit.

Why then do you make such a point about saying that the Bible does not present us with timeless principles? I think the main reason is probably that there is one biblical principle in particular that you want to insist is not permanently valid. I say this because, despite my promptings, you give only one example of the kind of timeless principle which people might mistakenly

claim to find in the Bible. That example is found in your anecdote about the straight and the gay Christian at the Bolton conference. "One had appealed to a timeless biblical principle that made the other feel condemned." Presumably the timeless principle in question was the biblical prohibition of gay sex.

Word and Spirit

When the Apostle Paul opposes the Spirit and the law, you understand the law to be simply the Old Testament law, and thus part of God's Word (Scripture). This crucial exegetical move allows you to contrast Word and Spirit, and to give the primacy to the Spirit.

Thus in your view, Galatians 5:1 means that "we don't get our guidance from the way God put it in the law, but from how God leads us in the Spirit."

"God's Spirit still provides [principles] today when the biblical ones need reformation."

With the guidance of the Spirit it is possible for us "to extend the Bible's own process of change into our own time."

"[We], like Peter, should be open to the Spirit to guide us into new truth..." (my emphases). Clearly, the Spirit moves us beyond the Word, in your view.

The relationship of Word and Spirit was one of the great issues that was at stake in the Reformation. The Reformers stressed, against both the Roman Catholic Church and the radical Anabaptists, that the Spirit does not lead the church beyond the truth contained in the Bible. They insisted on the sufficiency



Al Wolters

of Scripture. As formulated in the *Belgic Confession* (Article 7) this means, among other things, that "no one — not even an apostle or an angel from heaven, as Paul says — ought to teach other than what the Holy Scriptures have already taught us."

Mr. Zekveld, in his letter to CC, was quite right to refer to this part of the confession in connection with your views, for you hold that the Spirit guides into new truth, gives us principles not already taught in Scripture.

Continuity versus conformity

You hasten to add, however, that the Spirit does not lead us into *totally* new truth: the new truth is always in *continuity* with the truth of Scripture. After all, it is the same Spirit which has guided God's people in both biblical and post-biblical times.

But this language of continuity is deceptive. Continuity means only uninterrupted connection, not normativity. The Queen Elizabeth Way, as it runs

between Hamilton and Niagara Falls, is continuous with the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto, but it runs in the opposite direction. By contrast, the Bible is a *canon*, that is, a standard or yardstick.

Our thinking and our living must be, not only in continuity with the Bible, but in *conformity* with it. Scripture, to quote the *Belgic Confession* again, is an "infallible rule." It is not just a point of departure, but the decisive *criterion* for life in the Spirit. You cannot appeal to the Spirit to go beyond the Word.

All of this is not to deny the indispensable role of the Spirit. The Spirit leads us into the truth of the Word: he helps us to understand it, to take it to heart, and to apply it to new situations. Above all, he uses the Word to point us to Christ. But the Spirit does not introduce a series of changes to the Word.

The biblical evidence

But what about the evidence which you bring forward from Scripture to substantiate your view? Does Scripture itself not teach the primacy of the Spirit? What about Peter in Acts 10, the

"The Scriptures have been completed by the coming of Jesus Christ and the testimony of the apostles to him."

Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, the Apostle Paul in his discussions of the law? Should the *Belgic Confession* not yield to Scripture itself?

In my opinion, the basic flaw in all your appeals to Scripture is that they fail to do justice to the uniqueness of the redemptive-historical transition from Old Testament to New. All your

examples have to do with the central turning point in the biblical story: the point at which the ancient promises to Abraham had finally come to fulfillment in Christ, through whom the Gentiles were now being drawn into God's covenant with his people. This was a "time of transition" without parallel, for it meant the climax of the covenant, and the transformation of the role of the law which had governed God's people ever since Moses.

It was the inauguration of the New Testament era, in which we still live today, and which will last until Christ's return in glory. It is not, as you seem to suppose, a paradigm for every major cultural transition which the church faces before the Second Coming.

Brother, your reading of the Bible seems to depend on the hermeneutical postulate that we today stand to Scripture as a whole as the apostles stood to the Old Testament. Just as the Spirit led them to go beyond the law of Moses, so he may lead us to go beyond the teaching of the apostles.

But this postulate is fundamentally misguided. We are not apostles, and our Bible is not incomplete. The Scriptures have been completed by the coming of Jesus Christ and the testimony of the apostles to him. Any appeal to the guidance of the Spirit which is somehow in competition with that Word, or seeks to change its teaching (ethical or otherwise) should be viewed with the greatest suspicion.

Dr. Al Wolters is professor of religion and theology/classical languages who teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster. This answer concludes for now the exchange between Drs. Hart and Wolters. We invite readers to join the discussion in short letters.

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News Comment

Two weeks that were



Bert Hielema

HERE IS GOOD NEWS, at least for my column: Today the news in the real world is weirder than fiction, and that makes writing my column much easier.

Take Clinton's recent visit to Russia.

On TV I saw Mr. Yeltsin, the local lame-duck president, mumbling incoherently while his pale-faced U.S. counterpart was trying to fumble his way out of an impossible situation when questioned about his finally admitted dalliance. Both "victims" of lack of self-discipline: the one, drink; the other, sex. How have the mighty fallen. But they

signed an arms control deal. Here is a country with 22,500 nuclear arms still aimed at the U.S.A., and an army that is completely out of control. Last week a Russian soldier drove a tank to the nearest City Hall and threatened to blow it up if he was not paid.

BACK HOME, THE Canadian forces sealed a deal with the native population in the near-Arctic to clean up the DEW line residue. DEW stands for Distant Early Warning line, which the U.S. Army constructed in the '50s, with

Canada's blessing, but which left lots of toxic debris.

BUT THAT DEBRIS is nothing compared to what the Russian Army has buried on its soil. Near Penza, a city of 500,000, some 500 kilometres southeast of Moscow, in a rich farming area, the Red Army has left unmarked burial sites of thousands of chemical bombs. Those bombs are now affecting the water systems and causing acute poisoning — violent stomach and intestinal inflammations which result in massive loss of bodily fluids and salts.

That is only one site. Across Siberia's vast steppes and into the seas from the Baltic to the Pacific, the Soviet Union, and later Russia, has dumped, buried, spilled and exploded chemical and nuclear substances that had only one purpose: killing people.

At one site alone there is more than enough nerve gas, if distributed in small doses, to wipe out every human being on earth. But last week, before the cameras in a beautiful Kremlin room, the farce of arms control was being filmed, staged by two tired actors. Hilarious and immensely sad.

RUSSIA. IT IS desperately trying to wrench itself out of chaos and so is selling its gold, oil, nickel, platinum and whatever is buried in its rich soil, at any price, to anybody, just to get its hungry hands on hard cash. It never did care about the devastation it has caused in creation. It never did mind the pollution pelted into the air by these very energy intensive processes. And now that it needs dollars and Marks more than ever, even the pretence of environmental care is gone.

Canada, with a similar topography and much stricter controls, is, at least partly, becoming the victim of this fire sale, and so its currency has gone down: almost half of our exports are exactly the stuff on which Russia has placed a For Sale sign, with 50 per cent off.

RUSSIA: THE DYING giant. Ten years ago we were delighted that the Bear in the East had been slain. The entire West talked about the "peace dividend" — which never came. Now the other Bear is at hand, causing financial chaos. And the world trembles, fearing that our financial security is going.

Russia, slain not by military might or smarter technology, but laid low by the cancer of corruption, an inevitable by-product of capitalism when forced on a totally secular people.

Basically, capitalism as we know it is a bastard child of Christianity. In the West, the ingrained and traditional attitude of honesty and trust has been assumed. In Russia and elsewhere, where there is no foundation based on the Christian principles of dependability, capitalism doesn't work. It needs a framework of law-abidance. Lacking that, crime and bribery are the result.

Russia was slain by the very forces that wanted to rescue it because the people in power in the West didn't understand that. Even though the formal expressions of Christianity are waning, its basic assumptions are still (mostly) adhered to: law, order, fairness, honest pay for honest work.

OUR VERSION OF Christianized capitalism comes complete with "the elect" rich and the condemned poor, with heaven on earth for the few fortunate who follow the economic rules, and hell for the masses that don't. But such a secularized faith does not give security, and the present anxiety is made worse by Russia, which, by defaulting on its legal debts, has undermined the unwritten laws of capitalism.

But then, can much else be expected from a country that has lived for centuries by the law of the fist?

ALL OF THIS FINANCIAL mess started in the Land of the Rising Sun: Japan. A curious country. There, a company making toilets is going down the drain: not your run-of-the-mill flush toilet. No, this company sells a special \$5,000 sophisticated model whose lid opens as you approach; which cleans, dries and massages your bottom; prevents nasty smells and germs; and heats the room. But, due to the depression in Japan, sales are slow and the company has announced it will cut 1,000 jobs in the next two years.

EVEN THOUGH CLEAN behinds are treasured, the Japanese people are afraid to confront current problems and clean up the country's banking mess. Just imagine: with 100 million people, the bank debt

alone amounts to \$10,000 for each woman, man and child. "Defer no time; delays have dangerous ends," wisely said Shakespeare, long ago; but with each week that passes Japan's bad debts are increasing because voters in Tokyo and throughout the country are afraid to discover that they are much poorer than they think they are. And since any economy is driven by a feel-good atmosphere, despondency would lead to an even greater decline.

So the politicians keep on smiling and proclaiming that things will turn out alright — just like Mr. Chretien is doing in Canada. But reality has the habit of eventually showing up the true nature of things.

THAT TRUE NATURE is ugly, in this case. The market-playing game is turning nasty. The Toronto Stock Exchange is off almost 30 per cent. That hurts. We all know that the American dollar is up and the Canadian dollar down. People believe that America is the global safe-money haven. But Americans now owe the rest of the world trillions of dollars, making the U.S. the largest debtor nation of all. Who is fooling whom here?

The entire money market is out of wack and nobody knows what to do. We live in the Age of Money with a capital M, and it has plunged the entire world into the most perilous instability.

COLUMBUS SUCKED a thousand years-worth of gold from the Caribbean in three years and then extinguished much of its human life. Something similar now rages all over the globe, including its polar regions. Everywhere money is using up creation at such a pace that all the large land and sea animals of the earth, and most of its birds are under a sentence of extinction.

There is a war raging. The war is between money and creation. At stake are our very values: the choice is money/death or creation/life. We need to break the compulsory nature of money and make possible a future in which we are not at permanent war with God's creation and one another.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont., where he joyfully struggles with these difficult matters and prays that we rich may live more simply so that the poor may simply live.

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Comment

Traveller or tourist: Which are you?

Dear Peter:

Greetings from Prague! It seems odd to be writing to you from this place; in fact, it still feels odd to be in this place, despite the fact that I've been here for almost four weeks now. I hope you're having a relaxing summer gallivanting around the Midwest.

I think a sabbatical was a good investment for me this summer, although it's a short one as sabbaticals go. I know that already I've been energized and revived to an extent, if these things can be measured; that's worth far more than the money I've spent. But it's a little early to process what I've learned, and I'm at a loss as to what to write to you that won't sound like an envy-inducing postcard: "Having a great time!"

I was thinking today that it's the soundbites and quick image-flashes that stand out in my mind — kinda like channel surfing, except it's in real life. In a city as visually and historically stimulating as Prague, it's overwhelming, and pretty hard to absorb in such a short time. I came here to learn how to write, but my writing teacher taught me how to observe.

And I have seen so much. Prague is a city of contrasts that will be a long time recovering from 400 consecutive years of domination by each of its neighbors in turn: the Hapsburgs, the Germans and the Russians. Yet in some ways that road to recovery seems amazingly speedy. Designer shops and McDonalds dominate the streets. A flurry of tourists from all over Europe fill the Old Town Square daily.

Before the 1989 Velvet Revolution, there were no computers or photocopiers in this country, and no publishing took place without state approval. Today there exist some 3,500 publishing houses trying to keep up with the demand. Translation is a growth industry here; this nation is so hungry to read what the rest of the world has written, as well as those books written by its own authors, books that could not be published before 1989. These writers have become the soul of this nation in a way that can only happen when a culture's intelligentsia is slaughtered or exiled over and over again.

My writing teacher is a survivor of three concentration camps, including Auschwitz, but he has an almost morbid capability to laugh at the horror he has witnessed. I think the Czech nation as a whole has the same ability. Another writer, this one an American-Jew who has lived in Prague and Vienna for the past 30 years, told us the Czech nation has always been Western, and was dragged kicking and screaming into the East in both 1948 and 1968.

And from what I see of Prague, a definitively Western city that bears a striking resemblance to Vienna, the Czech Republic has bounced back with lightning speed. Prague is a city full of life, welcoming us fumbling, ignorant, sometimes rude tourists to their party — a decade-long party to celebrate its independence and the singularity that comes with being a small nation at the crossroads of Europe.

My teacher tells us to be like little children and notice everything around us as if we are seeing it for the first time. But, he says, because we are writers, we must then reflect on it as if we were Socrates. Travelling to a foreign country is like that — you wander around like a lost child, affected by all you see. But when you come home, it is to a better understanding of not only where you have been, but of where you have come from and who you are.

Happy travels, Peter! I hope your summer has been as edifying as mine.

Elizabeth

Two under 35



Peter Schuurman

Elizabeth Salomons

Dear Elizabeth:

Wow! It appears that you are having a profound cultural experience, taking you deep into a rich history and at the same time providing some significant personal reflection. At first glance, my vacation seems rather superficial in comparison.

Dirk Schouten (a friend on leave from teaching in Korea) and I took a driving tour of the Great Lakes spread over two-and-a-half weeks. It was a relaxing trip that took us from Michigan to Chicago to Iowa, Minnesota, Manitoba (Winnipeg), northern Ontario (Thunder Bay), and then home. We stopped at our alma maters (Calvin and Dordt), visited numerous friends, and did some golfing and camping along the way. It was a relaxing, "social" vacation.

I've often thought about the difference between being a tourist and being a traveller. A tourist is someone who focuses on destination, and the destination is often some sort of sight or experience that is packaged for people who have come from a far away place. Tourist ventures are all planned and carefully controlled so that nothing unexpected happens. They are usually manufactured for the masses, and have an impersonal connection to (what should really be called) "the consumer." They return home with some photographs, souvenirs, an empty wallet and a tan.

Travellers are different. They are more focused on the journey itself, and keep the destination undetermined. They seek personal contact with natives of the places they visit, and risk being offended or changed by the various communities with whom they intersect. Plans are often tentative, and are overturned from time to time. The traveller (like the writer) is more of an observer and a listener than a consumer. The traveller returns home with some gifts, some new ideas and maybe even a changed heart.

I realize I've set up an unfair dichotomy here, with an obvious prejudice towards travelling. I guess I'm the kind of person who enjoys the unexpected, the intense and the personal. And I like to think that our trip was a travelling trip rather than a tourist trip.

First of all, our focus was people, not places. Our holiday was very much about eating BBQ, story-telling and debating until late at night, and worshipping in a variety of local churches. For instance, Fred VanGeest, the political science professor at Dordt, hosted us and showed us photographs of his research trip to Nicaragua.

Secondly, we didn't know how long we would stay with each group of friends, nor what activity would fill each day we stayed. There was a freedom and spontaneity there that makes you feel very alive and open to the world. For example, my car radiator blew on the Chicago Interstate when the temperatures were up in the 105 degree range (with humidity). We had to stay an extra day in the city, and the mechanic was kind enough to drive us to the nearest golf course before he started to fix the car.


If to travel is to gracefully approach and court difference at the risk of being changed, I think we must have travelled — and the same for you.

I still don't feel I've had the profound cultural experience you are having, but I think in the next few days some of the people and experiences I've had will start to percolate and settle in a me that has been moved by the lives and dreams of some very special people.

Wishing you a safe and happy return,
Peter

Elizabeth Salomons is a freelance editor who lives in Toronto and is a member of First CRC there. Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Church's chaplain at Brock University. He's a member of Jubilee CRC in St. Catharines.

Classifieds

Classified Rates	Marriages	Teachers	For Sale	Miscellaneous												
<p>(Revised February 1, 1995)</p> <p>Births \$25.00</p> <p>Marriages & Engagements \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries \$90.00</p> <p>Obituaries \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks \$35.00</p> <p>Birthdays \$40.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is \$15.00. Letter under file number \$35.00 extra. Photos: \$25.00 additional charge.</p> <p>Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.</p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is not acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are not acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313</p> <p>E-mail: ccadverts@aol.com</p>	<p>HOLMAN/SKROBAR : With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, Klaas and Hammie Holman of Mt. Brydges, Ont. are pleased to announce the wedding of their daughter</p> <p>ANGELA HELEN to GREGORY LAURENT son of Marjan and Marcella Skrobar of Windsor, Ont. They will exchange their vows before God and His people on September 26, 1998 at 4 p.m. in St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica, 196 Duffenn Ave. London, Ont. They will reside at 448 Morrington Ave., London, Ont., N5Y 3C9</p>	<p>BARRIE, Ont.: Timothy Chr. School invites applications for a Grade 6 maternity leave from January to June of 1999. Timothy currently serves 128 families with a school population of 229 students. Teachers must be able to enthusiastically articulate their faith. Preference will be given to applicants with training and experience with special needs students. Please direct resumes to:</p> <p>Mrs. Jane Tjeerdema c/o Timothy Chr. School 49 Ferris Lane, Barrie, ON L4M 2Y1 E-mail: tcs@barint.on.ca</p>	<p>For Sale: JOHANNUS Sweetinck III Organ 3-Man., 32-note AGO pedal, 52-stops etc. Dealer demo. Full warranty. Suitable for church or home. Ext. channels available. Call (519) 688-3540.</p>	<p>CLINTON, ONTARIO ADULT LIFE LEASE RESIDENCES available 936 sq.ft. to 1235 sq.ft. Fully wheelchair accessible, sprinkler system, central air, security throughout building. Dutch and English spoken. For more info, call (519) 233-7296 or (519) 462-7862.</p>												
	<p>Anniversaries</p> <p></p> <p>1958 1998 Congratulations to our uncle and aunt</p> <p>FRED and JANET STRIUKSMA with their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank you for all that you have been in the sharing of your love and home with us. Your faithfulness to God and each other is an example and an inspiration. We love you, Ed & Karen VanderWindt Matthew, Kathryn, David, Benjamin John & Renée VanderWindt Philip, Rachel Mike & Judy VanderWindt Nicole We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you for many more years to come. Address: R.R. #2, Norval, ON L0P 1K0</p>	<p>STRATFORD, Ont.: Stratford District Chr. School invites teaching applications for a definite opening in Grade 3/4 at 45% (afternoons only). This position would begin in November 1998 and be completed by the end of June 1999. Strengths in music and computers would be an asset. If you would like to be part of a dynamic Christian staff and community, please send your resume by Oct. 2, 1998, to:</p> <p>Mr. Edward Petruama, Principal Stratford District Chr. School 130 Huron Rd., R.R. #1 Sebringville, ON N0K 1X0 Phone: (519) 393-5675 Fax: (519) 393-6306</p>	<p>For Sale: Senior Oriented (55+) Condo Apartment. Adjacent to Chr. Ref. Church, Chilliwack, B.C. 1235 sq. ft., 2 bedroom (large master), 2 full baths, Valor gas fireplace, airconditioned living/dining room, 5 appliances included, covered parking, amenity room. Asking \$89,900. Immaculate condition!! Call Bill Driesen, Homelife Glenayre Realty, Bus.Ph.: (604) 795-2955 or Fax: (604) 795-2770, Vancouver Toll Free: 856-8185.</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Bed & Breakfast Niagara Falls, Ont. Easy walk to the Falls. Miles of parks with cycle paths. Beautiful rooms, superb breakfast. Dutch spoken. Day trips planned. Joan and Mike Havinga (905) 358-3534. E-mail: mhavinga@freenet.npic.on.ca</p>												
	<p>For Rent</p> <p>For Rent: Large 4-bedroom exec. ranch home situated in quiet country setting. Ideal for professional family. No lease required. 7 min. from downtown Hamilton, Ont. For more info, please call Redeemer College (905) 648-2131, ext. 290.</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #12 923 2nd Ave. S. Leithbridge, AB T1J 0C7</p>	<p>The Living Word Sermons for reading services</p> <p>CRC Contact: R. Vander Ploeg Sec/Treas. 37 Brick Pond Lane Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1 Phone: (519) 539-2117</p>												
<p>Thank You</p> <p>RUMPH: A heartfelt thank you to all who shared in our happiness on the occasion of our 50th wedding anniversary. We would especially like to thank our children and grandchildren who did so much to make this an unforgettable day. We thank our heavenly Father above for all His love and for giving us so many years together. Henry and Lammie Rumph.</p>	<p>Job Opportunities</p> <p>I would like an energetic person to work in meat processing plant in the Cambridge area. Must be able to do lifting e.g. to work in shipping and packaging department, along with other duties. Call (519) 621-5829</p>	<p>Support Reformed Faith Witness</p> <p>Vision Statement: Reformed Faith Witness is a Christian ministry committed to communicate biblical perspectives on current and world events in accordance with Reformed traditions.</p> <p>Please consider making a financial gift for 1998. All contributions will be used to help Christian Courier and the cause of Reformed Christian journalism. Send your cheque and complete the accompanying coupon and we will issue an official receipt. Thank you very much!</p>	<p>To: Reformed Faith Witness 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p> <p>Registration No. 89131 6093 RR0001</p> <p>— Yes, please enter my/our name on your mailing list and keep me/us informed about Reformed Faith Witness.</p> <p>— I/we enclose a donation payable to Reformed Faith Witness. Please send receipt.</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>Name</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"> </td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"> </td></tr><tr><td>Address</td><td> </td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"> </td></tr><tr><td>City/Town</td><td>Code</td></tr></table> <p>P.S.: CC subscription and advertising payments are not tax deductible. Only amounts of \$10 or over clearly designated to Reformed Faith Witness will be officially receipted.</p>	Name	Amount					Address				City/Town	Code	
Name	Amount															
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Classifieds

Job Opportunities

DORDT COLLEGE

Vice President for Business Affairs

Dordt College invites applications and nominations for the position of Vice President for Business Affairs. Serving on the president's cabinet, the VPBA provides leadership for all financial and business affairs of the college. Areas of oversight include financial accounting and reporting, contract management, budgeting, human resources, physical plant maintenance and construction, purchasing, risk management, and investments.

Candidates should have significant experience in fiscal systems and operations management in higher education or a similar setting and should have a minimum of five years of successful leadership of business, financial, and administrative functions. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are necessary, along with knowledge in the use of management information systems. A graduate degree in an appropriate field is preferred.

Enthusiastic Christians with a commitment to the Reformed faith and the desire to help lead a dynamic and growing institution are invited to send a letter of application and resume to the office of the president at the address below. Review of applications will begin November 1, 1998, and continue until the position is filled.

Dordt College is an equal opportunity employer and encourages application by women, minorities, and disabled persons.

DORDT COLLEGE

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Job Opportunities

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Please send a letter of application by **Sept. 30, 1998**, along with your resume and a statement of vision of Christian education to:

**Cora Beking, RCHS Search Committee Chair, R.R. #1,
Oxford Station, ON K0G 1T0.**
Phone: (613) 258-5396. E-mail: beking_jc@msn.com

Miscellaneous

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**Send your questions
to
Peter and Marja.
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**An Invitation to Friends of
Stan de Jong and Christian Courier**

Friends and former colleagues of Stan de Jong are cordially invited to come to a reception honoring Stan's service to the Christian community on his retirement from *Christian Courier* as publisher and manager, and recognizing Corrie's faithful companionship.

The stand-up event will be held at Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church (13 Wilholme Dr., St. Catharines) on

Friday, October 16, 1998 at 7:30 p.m.
Best wishes only, please.

RSVP before Oct. 9, 1998.

Phone or write Bert Witvoet at 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1. Phone: (905) 682-8311; Fax: (905) 682-8313; e-mail: cceditor@aol.com

"For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation" (Ps. 149:4).



**Stan de Jong (r.) in discussion with former president of
Calvinist Contact Publishing Ltd., Marinus Koole.**

Miscellaneous

**The Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards
for High School Seniors**

Awards are given annually for research papers on the topics selected by the Calvinism Committee. The 1999 topic:

**The Care of the Poor according to John Calvin
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For research paper guidelines and further information, request the Meeter Award Brochure*

from The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies,
Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary,
3201 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 USA, tel. 616-957-7081.

Deadline for completed papers: January 15, 1999

*Brochures have also been sent to high schools associated with
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Job Opportunities

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Miscellaneous

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Events

**There will be
No Issue on
October 2.**

Please note the following e-mail addresses
for Christian Courier:

Bert Witvoet — Editor: cceditor@aol.com
Marian Van Til — Associate Editor: cceditor2@aol.com
Alan Doerksen — Journalist: ccjournal@aol.com
Stan de Jong — Manager: ccjournal@aol.com
Grace Bowman — Subscriptions: ccsubscrip@aol.com
Ingrid Torn — Advertising: ccadverts@aol.com

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Sept. 19 Camp Shalom's 21st Annual Fall Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at Camp Shalom, on Hwy. 24A, north of Paris, Ont. Info.: (519) 623-4860. (#)

Sept. 19 Praise & Worship Conference, 11.30 a.m. - 4 p.m., led by Colleen and Grace, at the Chr. Ref. Church, Ancaster, Ont. Sponsored by the Ancaster CRC. \$10 registration (in advance, please). Public praise and worship at 7 p.m. open to all. Info.: Corrie Mulder at (905) 679-2296 or the church. (#)

Sept. 23, 25, 26 Prof. Hugh Cook of Redeemer College will be reading from his new book, *Home in Alfalfa*. Wed. **Sept. 23**: at 8 p.m., Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.; **Frid. Sept. 25**: at 7:30 p.m., Redeemer Chr. High, Nepean, Ont.; **Sat. Sept. 26**: 2 p.m., Chapters-Pinecrest, Ottawa, Ont. Info.: (905) 648-2131, ext. 402.

Sept. 24-26 CLAC/WRF-sponsored conference exploring christian perspectives on shaping the workplace. At the Holiday Inn, Burlington, Ont. Plenary speakers: Don Posterski, Harry Antonides, Lee Hardy, Elwin Beukes and Marc Bacon. Free public presentation with Dr. John Bolt on **Frid., Sept. 25**, on: "Greed, Goodness, and God - Hope for Canada's Bottom Line." Info.: (905) 670-7386 or visit web page: www.interlog.com/~wrf/cwuf.htm

Sept. 25 Celebrating 40 years of Christ-centred education! At Wellandport Christian School, Wellandport, Ont. All former students, teachers, supporters and committee members are invited to attend a barbeque, open house and thanksgiving program from 4-10 p.m. Info.: (905) 386-6272. (#)

Sept. 26 Toronto District Chr. High School's 35th Anniversary Celebration Dinner! All friends of TDCH are invited to attend this event at TDCH, Woodbridge, Ont. Tickets \$35. Info.: (905) 851-1772.

Sept. 27 Smithville CRC, Smithville, Ont., celebrates its 25th anniversary! Special worship service at 10 a.m. Everyone invited. Refreshments after the service. Info.: (905) 957-3449. (#)

Oct. 4 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Jacob Kuntz, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., Ancaster, Ont.

Oct. 7 Anniversary Convention 1998, Can. Fed. of Chr. Ref. Women, 11 a.m. (note!), Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Theme: "Great Is God's Faithfulness." Speaker: Rev. J. Kuntz. Music: Redeemer Choir & students. Tickets: \$20 each. Send stamped, self-addressed envelope with cheque (payable to Convention 1998), to P.O. Box 335, Grimsby, ON L3M 4H8. (#)

Oct. 11 First CRC, Owen Sound, Ont., celebrates its 50th anniversary! Variety program on Friday. Homecoming tea/dinner on Saturday. Special service on Sunday. Info.: Linda DeBoer at (519) 371-6192. (#)

Oct. 17 "A Day of Encouragement and Training" (for deacons, elders and other caregivers) at Hamilton District Chr. High School, Ancaster, Ont. Theme: "Follow the Way of Love!" Featuring 54 workshops, including special sessions for elders and caregivers. Also six workshops geared especially towards persons with a disability and their caregivers. Cost \$40. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or call Diaconal Ministries at (905) 646-4511. (#)

Oct. 17 York Music Fest, featuring from Holland: Martin Zonnenberg (organist) and Marjolien de Wit (flutist), and from Canada: Willem van Suijdam (organist) and Heather Harpell (soloist), at 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, York, Ont. Info.: (905) 772-3700.

Oct. 17 "Break the Silence," a one-day conference to inform and educate people on the effects of pornography, presented with the support of the Alliston Christian community. From 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the Banting Memorial High School, 203 Victoria St., E., Alliston, Ont. For info. and to register call (705) 435-3893.

Oct. 18 Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, St. Catharines, Ont., is celebrating "50 years of Chr. Ref. presence in the Niagara Peninsula." All former pastors, former members and friends are invited to attend a special thanksgiving service at 3:30 p.m. For info. call (905) 934-0631 or (905) 937-0314. (#)

Oct. 22-25 Organ Concert/Hymn Sing, with Dutch organist Sander van Marion, The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir (Brockville, Ottawa & Kingston) and brass musicians. **Oct. 22**: 8 p.m., First Presb. Church, Brockville, Ont.; **Oct. 23**: 8 p.m., St. Andrew's Presb. Church, Ottawa, Ont.; **Oct. 24**: 8 p.m., St. George's Cathedral, Kingston, Ont.; **Oct. 25**: 7:30 p.m., King St. United Church, Trenton, Ont. Free-will offering. Info.: (613) 224-1597. (#)

Oct. 30-31 Academic conference on "The Legacy of Abraham Kuyper and Leo XIII," sponsored by the Acton Institute and Calvin Theol. Sem., Grand Rapids, Mich. Info.: (616) 454-3080. (#)

Nov. 6 Christian Festival Concert by the choirs and brass of the O.C.M.A., Leendert Kooij, director. Guest artists: Andre Knevel, Sander van Marion, Lisette Emmink, the Kooij sisters, and the Concert Band "Euphonia." At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ont. Info./tickets: (416) 636-9779. (#)

Nov. 6-7 Conference: "A Time to Talk: Toward Abuse-Free Church Communities," at the Grey Nuns Retreat Centre, Edmonton, Alta. Keynote speakers: Beth Swagman and Ken Blue, 10 workshops. For info. call Dr. Harry Van Belle at (403) 440-4661.

Nov. 15 Dutch worship service led by Rev. John Klomps, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., Ancaster, Ont.

Nov. 27 Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis, Ont. will be celebrating 50 years of service to our God at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Centre, Port Dover, Ont. All former and present members are invited to attend. Info.: (519) 587-5069.

Two appointments for TKUC

EDMONTON — The King's University College in Edmonton has appointed Ms. Ellen Vlieg-Paquette as Vice President, Administration and Finance. Ms. Vlieg-Paquette has 18 years of experience as a Chartered Accountant, and was previously employed as Principal in the Alberta's Office of the Auditor General.



Ellen Vlieg-Paquette

Also appointed at The King's University College is Ms. Marcille Frederick, as Director of Library Services. Ms. Frederick holds Masters degrees in History, Philosophical Foundations, and Library Sciences, and previously served as library director at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto and at the School for Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Marcille Frederick

New degrees mark new era at Redeemer



From l. to r.: The Honorable Dave Johnson, Justin Cooper and Ben Harsevoort.

Mark Van Beveren

ANCASTER, Ont. — The Honorable Dave Johnson, Ontario Minister of Education, presented Bill Pr 17 to Redeemer College president Justin Cooper and board of governor's chair A. Ben Harsevoort at the Sept. 8 convocation at Redeemer in Ancaster, Ont.

Bill Pr 17 gives the college the right to issue BA and B.Sc. degrees. The bill received royal assent in June, but the official celebration was delayed to allow Redeemer students to participate.

Redeemer College is an independent liberal arts university which was begun by members of the Christian Reformed Church who felt the need for such an institution in Ontario. But since its first academic year in 1982, Redeemer had been allowed to

grant only a Bachelor of Christian Studies degree which implied that it is a Bible school.

Dr. Adrian Guldemond of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS), and a member of Redeemer's government relations committee, was pleased to see the Education Minister in attendance. "For the first time in over a decade the government is sending signals that independent schools will, in due time, be properly recognized for their part in educating responsible citizens for Ontario," Guldemond said.

"The Christian school community has been praying and working for educational justice for several decades. We hope and pray that the Lord's timetable may be quicker than we expected."

News

You don't fool around with a patriarch



A landman discusses access rights with farmers prior to a seismic survey being conducted across the farmers' fields.

Jessie Schut

HYPHE, Alta. — If Wiebo Ludwig had lived a hundred years ago, perhaps he would have been hailed as a folk hero. His life reads like a flamboyant fiction novel, with colorful characters, romance, conflict, persistence in the face of difficulties, dramatic gestures, police involvement, tears, jeers and courtroom action.

The turbulence he and his family find themselves in now is nothing new to Ludwig. It's been a part of his life almost since the day he was born in the Netherlands in 1941. He was the seventh child of a tailor who was fighting in the Dutch Resistance against the Nazis at the time.

In 1951 the family immigrated to Canada, settling in Red Deer, Alberta, after stops in Rocky Mountain House and Sylvan Lake. The language barrier made school and friendships difficult, and eventually, at the age of 15, he ran away from home to become a logger in the Caroline area of Alberta. It was there, he says, that he developed his love for the land.

At 17, he joined the navy and received training as a frogman, and also in the art of dismantling mines. He was assigned to *HMCS Iroquois* in Halifax, and toured the Atlantic and the Caribbean. Once he was caught in a tremendous storm, which he credits as the beginning of a spiritual awakening. He realized that he was wasting his life, and managed to get out of his enlistment after only two years of a five-year stint.

In the ensuing years, he moved around, trying to finish school in Red Deer, then heading for the Queen Charlotte Islands, and eventually enrolling at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. At Dordt, Ludwig earned his teaching degree and also married Mamie Lou Haan, the youngest daughter of Dordt president B.J. Haan. They both taught at a Christian school in Ocheyedan, Iowa, for several years, then moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Ludwig enrolled in Calvin Seminary. He graduated from there in 1975.

Troubled years

His first charge, in 1976, at Bethlehem Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay in 1976 lasted only a year, after which he was declared eligible for a call elsewhere. He spent more time in Sioux Center, and then in 1978 he accepted a call to a newly formed congregation, Trinity CRC in Goderich, Ontario.

It wasn't long before there were problems, there, too. A member of that church was quoted in *Alberta Report* as saying, "There was nothing uplifting in his sermons, and he became known as a chauvinist and a dictator. With Wiebo, it was 'his way or the highway.'"

Eventually, Classis Huron revoked his license to preach. Ludwig appealed, but in the meantime also started another congregation on his own. However, Synod 1983 upheld Classis Huron's decision to dismiss Ludwig from the ministry on the

grounds of "his refusal to accept ecclesiastical authority, his schismatic activities, and his resignation from membership in the Christian Reformed Church." It was time for Ludwig to move on.

He took two Goderich families with him as they moved around the U.S. One family returned to Goderich eventually, but the Boonstras stayed with him. They all went to Alberta in 1985, hoping to find some stability and peace in their lives.

Ten years of peace

"We had to wrestle with our own weaknesses," says Ludwig. "Through struggle, we are tempered. I asked the Lord to give me some peace because I had a young family. I asked for about 10 years of peace, and the Lord did give me that."

That peace was found in their families, in developing their land in a stewardly way, and in being a worshipping community together. Every morning still starts with a time of devotions, usually led by Wiebo himself. Sundays, the worship time extends for a longer period.

Some people might quibble with Ludwig's notion of a peaceful life. It is a patriarchal community in which the men have the responsibility of caring for their families, and the women submit to "their" men. According to sources close to the extended family, women who showed an independent spirit or who disobeyed sometimes had their heads shaved.

During these years, there were even times when Ludwig sent his wife, Mamie, back home to Sioux Center, and even excommunicated her from their community, until she had "repented."

Still, Ludwig says that if they had not moved to Alberta and found this time of peace, he probably would be in dire straits: "I would probably be divorced, living in a gloomy little apartment," he told *Alberta Report* reporter Kevin Steel. "Instead, here I am, surrounded by family." His only desire is to live a life that is God-conscious and centred on family, he says.

Going public

But in 1990, the outside world intruded into his orderly existence. Resource companies began an active and aggressive program of drilling in the whole Grande Prairie area. Ludwig's

land was prime territory. When he sought to halt the drilling, they moved next door to the property of an absentee landlord.

Three times oil companies have documented accidental leaks of H₂S ("sour gas") in wells close to the farm, but Ludwig says there have been many more instances. The family has had to evacuate the farm several times, and went public with their complaints by appearing on talk shows and flooding politicians and the media with letters.

They produced a one-hour video called "Home Sour Home," which was shown at a film festival and received top

rested," he told a reporter. "But when they dump it on us, nothing happens."

In April this year, the Ludwigs were one of five families that filed two applications with AEUB to review the operations of Alberta Energy Company, Norcen Energy Resources and Rigel Energy Corporation. The families alleged that pollution was endangering their health and the environment.

The board, which regulates all oil and energy development in Alberta, refused, saying that the facilities were operating at acceptable levels. However, the board did offer to bring in an independent facilitator to meet with the affected parties. When

that independent inquiry was called in June, Ludwig refused to participate, saying he couldn't work with the format.

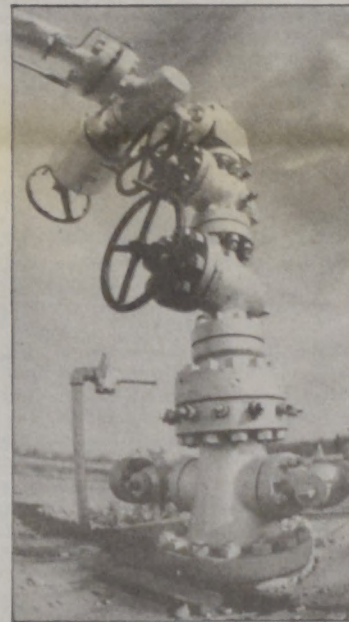
Unacceptable conditions

In July, Alberta Energy Company made an offer to purchase Ludwig's Trickle Creek Farm for \$800,000, an offer he and Boonstra accepted. However, at the last minute, the families were asked to sign a release that declared that their health hadn't suffered from the gas wells, and also a stipulation that they wouldn't live any closer than 800 kilometres from Grande Prairie. The families refused to sign and made the offer public.

There followed in short order two bombings on pipelines close to Trickle Creek Farms, and the birth of Bo and Renee's stillborn child. Three days later the bombing of the well site close to Hinton led to the arrests of Ludwig, one of his sons, his wife, and Boonstra.

Some people think that in a court trial a judge would be able to unweave the tangled skein that this story has become. Others doubt it.

"Do you really think that if an independent court of enquiry said, 'There's no problem here,' Mr. Ludwig would abide by the ruling?" asked one oil industry spokesperson. It was a rhetorical question, inviting no answer.



This gas wellhead equipment is called a Christmas tree.

marks, according to Ludwig.

Ludwig and Boonstra posted warning signs on the property, and at one point blockaded their road with a pile of snow. On top of the snow was a sign that warned of the possible presence of explosives.

In January of 1997, Ludwig decided to exercise civil disobedience by dumping a container of crude oil reeking of H₂S on the carpet of Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (AEUB) offices. He was arrested, charged with public mischief and found guilty. "When I dump garbage on them, I get ar-